ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. S. R. Goyal is the Professor and Head of the Department of History, Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (Rajasthan). Born in 1932, he has had an extremely illustrious educational career. He is an alumnus of the University of Allahabad from where he graduated (1953) and then obtained Master's degree (1955) standing 'first class first' in Ancient History. He first taught at the C. M. P. College, Allahabad University (1955–58), and then at the University of Gorakhpur (1958–70) and is now in the University of Jodhpur (since 1970). Professor Goyal is the author of more than 65 research papers and over twenty significant works which include *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen* (1963), *Prāchīna Bhārata kā Rājanītika Itihāsa*, Vol. III (1969), *Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aura Sāṁskṛtika Itihāsa*(1974), *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha* (1982), *Gupta-kālīna Abhilekha* (1984), *Maukhari-Pushyabhūti-Chālukya Yugīna Abhilekha* (1987), *Kauṭilya and Megasthenes* (1985), *A Religious History of Ancient India* (Vol. I, 1984; Vol. II, 1986), *Harsha and Buddhism* (1986), *Nanda-Maurya Sāmrājya kā Itihāsa* (1987), *Gupta Sāmrājya kā Itihāsa* (1987) and four volumes on 'Great Rulers of India' Series. He has also edited two works, namely, *Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya* (1980) *and Mughal Sāmrājya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa* (1987) for 'Indian History and Culture Series.' His Doctoral thesis, *A History of the Imperial Guptas* (1967), has been acclaimed as 'the best analysis of the Gupta period which I have ever read' by A. L. Basham (National Professor of Australia) and as 'imaginative', 'well-written' and 'a model of historiography' by Professor Eleanor Zelliot (Minnesota, U.S.A.). The various theories propounded in it, which have been the subject of numerous research papers, are described by Professor R. C. Majumdar, the doyen of Indian history, as 'deserving very careful consideration' and have obtained appreciation and recognition in learned works and journals, both Indian and foreign. His theory that the Brāhmī script was an invention of early Maurya period has also been described as 'penetrative, judicious and most acceptable.'

Professor Goyal has been a keen student of philosophy, especially philosophy of history. He topped in philosophy at the B.A. Examination of Allahabad University in 1953 and was awarded M. N. Nandi Gold Medal for the same. As a true historian, however, he has a deep knowledge of the original source materials. He has studied in detail the various branches of ancient Indian literature. His three volumes on ancient Indian inscriptions and a forthcoming work on ancient Indian coinage (*The Coinage of Ancient India*) testify to his mastery over epigraphic and numismatic sources. Thus in him is found a rare combination of three branches of knowledge—history, philosophy and literature.

A HISTORY
OF
INDIAN BUDDHISM

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Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut

First Edition, October, 1987

KUSUMANJALI PRAKASHAN
Ranjan Building, P. L. Sharma Road
Begum Bridge, Meerut-250 001

Published by Shankar Goyal for Kusumanjali Prakashan, Ranjan Building, P. L. Sharma Road, Begum Bridge, Meerut-250 001 and printed by Ved Prakash at Dayal Printers, 224, Biru Kuan, Meerut-250 002. Printed in India.

To
Smt. Sudha Pande
With Profound Respects and Regards

A LIST OF OUTSTANDING WORKS BY PROFESSOR S. R. GOYAL

(a) **Epigraphy**

1. Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha
2. Guptakālīna Abhilekha
3. Maukhari-Pushyabhūti-Chālukya Yugīna Abhilekha

(b) **Religious History**

4-5. A Religious History of Ancient India (in two Volumes)

6. Harsha and Buddhism
7. A History of Indian Buddhism

(c) **Political History**

8. Nanda-Maurya Sāmrājya kā Itihāsa
9. A History of the Imperial Guptas
10. Prāchīna Bhārata kā Rājanītika Itihāsa, Volume III
11. Gupta Sāmrājya kā Itihāsa
12. Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aura Sāṁskṛtika Itihāsa

(d) **Biographies**

13. Chandragupta Maurya
14. Priyadarśī-Aśoka
15. Samudragupta Parākramāṅka
16. Harsha Śīlāditya

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17. Kauṭilya and Megasthenes
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(f) **Edited Works**

20. Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya
21. Mughal Sāmrājya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa

(g) **Works to be Shortly Released**

22. The Coinage of Ancient India
23. Jainism Through the Ages
24. A Political History of Ancient India

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

We are extremely proud in presenting before the world of Indology *A History of Indian Buddhism* by Professor S. R. Goyal. Professor Goyal is a renowned scholar and is famous for his *A Religious History of Ancient India* (in two volumes) and *Harsha and Buddhism.* Now he has produced this comprehensive history of Indian Buddhism. Though there are several monographs available on the history of Buddhism in India but none of them seeks, as the present work does, to study the history of this religion against the background of India's cultural evolution and delineate its impact on and contribution to various facets of Indian culture. Further, most of the works dealing with the history of Indian Buddhism stop with the disappearance of this religion after the establishment of the Turkish rule in c. 1200 A.D. while the present monograph studies the fortunes of this religion in India upto modern times. We, therefore, believe that it will be received enthusiastically by scholars and students of Indian Buddhism as a comprehensive work on the subject with a new approach from an authoritative pen.

FOREWORD

Buddhism has had a long history both in time and space. Its original sources belong to languages as diverse as Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, Sinhalese, Burmese and Siamese, Tibetan and Mongolian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese. Modern researches relating to Buddhism are being published in atleast a score of major languages and it is difficult either to compile a bibliography or a bibliographical survey in which lacunae cannot be pointed out. Even so the need for general surveys which are accurate and up-to-date cannot be gainsaid. Students as well as scholars can always use a good survey with profit and that is why such surveys have been produced repeatedly by different scholars over the decades. They have been written from different points of view and represent different stages of Buddhist research. Thus Dr. T.W. Rhys Davids not only published his varied researches in his scholarly papers, Pali Dictionary and critical editions and translations, but also summarised the current state of research in Pali Buddhism in his American and Hibbert Lectures which survey a broad field. These Lectures not only summarise but also interpret doctrines and practices from a point of view which relies excessively on later Sinhalese tradition and a certain approach then fashionable in Comparative Religion. Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids questioned the reliance on the later Pali tradition in her acute researches. In her summary published in the Home University Library, however, she adopted a specific perspective on the history of religion. Miss I. B. Horner ably continued the work of her teacher. Buddhist studies in the European continent had begun with much greater emphasis on Tibetan, Sanskrit and Chinese sources and tended to concentrate on later schools and Mahāyāna. The works of Louis de la Vallée Poussin and Étienne Lamotte, Stcherbatsky and Frauwallner illustrate the full flowering of these studies. Critical translations constitute the core of this work. La Vallée Poussin and Stcherbatsky have also produced famous summaries which are based on specific philosophical

opinions. Lamotte and Frauwallner have also produced histories. Lamotte's general history of Indian Buddhism, despite its sweep and admirable details, does not seek to integrate Buddhism with any foundational vision of Indian society and culture. Frauwallner, on the other hand, does place Buddhist philosophy within a larger context, resembling Stcherbatsky in this respect. Neither Stcherbatsky nor Frauwallner have, however, any deep interest in the social presuppositions and implications of Buddhist philosophy. Of Japanese Buddhist scholars Professor Hajime Nakamura is the best known outside Japan and his recent bibliographical survey of Indian Buddhism is a masterpiece of patient and vast scholarship and its bibliographical notes clearly serve to highlight the difficulties of anyone who would seek to present a summary of the state of Buddhist researches today. Nevertheless one must be grateful to Professor Nakamura for presenting just such a summary.

Professor S.R. Goyal's present work *A History of Indian Buddhism* is another survey-work, but with a difference. It neither seeks to present an individual and personal impression of the subject nor has it a primarily bibliographical interest. Its point of view is that of a critical general historian who discusses the problems raised by the history of Indian Buddhism and its role in Indian culture. Unlike most Buddhist scholars his interest is not primarily literary or textual, nor philosophical or ideological. He is interested in presenting and critically discussing the development of a major theme of ancient Indian history in its social, cultural and intellectual aspects. Unlike the usual run of Buddhist scholars Professor Goyal is primarily a historian well-versed in the intricate subtleties of ancient Indian history. His account of Indian Buddhism is also distinguished by the fact that it depends in its basic features on the earlier works of Indian historians rather than on the different academic traditions of Buddhist study current in different countries abroad, though he is aware of them.

Professor Goyal begins with discussing the complicated question of the origins of Buddhism. Oldenberg, Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids and some others including myself have discussed some aspects of the question, but more recent writings appear to show little interest in the question. Perhaps one reason for this is that the usual lines of specialization tend to put Vedic and Buddhist

scholars in quite different compartments. Besides it seems that most students of Buddhism find it difficult to steer a 'middle way' between total scepticism and Pali orthodoxy, or between ahistorical philosophy and non-philosophical history. The origins of Buddhism cannot be understood without investigating the integral spiritual and social development of India upto the age of Buddha. It must, however, be understood that if the neglect of social history would be a plain error, the neglect of the relative autonomy of spiritual experience or of the role of the history of ideas would be an even greater error.

The expansion of Buddhism, the role of the Councils and of royal patronage have also been ably discussed by Professor Goyal. There was an amazing vitality in ancient Buddhism. The multiplication of the sects represented a veritable thought ferment which seized the age of Aśoka. Aśoka himself was not a mere 'outsider.' His *dhamma* reverberates with the message of the *Aṭṭhaka* and *Pārāyaṇa-vaggas* and is reminiscent of the passages quoted in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*.

The rise of Mahāyāna again presents a difficult problem and no final opinions can yet be formulated. Changes in social and spiritual experience as well as the meeting of ideas certainly furnished the background of the rise of Mahāyāna. The author clearly explains the basic distinction between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna and the general significance of the rise of Mahāyāna. The question of the decline of Buddhism is again shrouded in obscurity although much has been speculated about it. On all these aspects and other controversial problems Professor Goyal presents a commendable survey of the major views and discusses them critically.

A specially commendable part of Professor Goyal's work is its delineation of different aspects of Buddhistic social, historical and political ideas as also of Buddhist monastic and educational institutions. This part may be said to be quite original and individual. The book even touches on the present state of Buddhism in modern India and a number of appendices ably attend to several important problems.

The scope of Professor Goyal's monograph is comprehensive and its treatment critical and detailed. The presentation is lucid and systematic. The information is wide-ranging and up-to-date. It meets the need for a reliable single volume survey of Indian

Buddhism from historical point of view quite admirably. I am sure the students and scholars of the subject will find the work of great help both as an introduction to the subject and as a ready work of reference.

Allahabad
8.7.1987

G. C. PANDE
Formerly Vice-Chancellor
Universities of Rajasthan, Jaipur, and Allahabad

PREFACE

Śramaṇa tradition of which Buddhism is a branch, and the early reaches of which can be traced back to more than two millennia before Christ, was an important constituent element of Indian culture. Several controversies have centred round the nature and antiquity of Śramaṇa tradition. Many problems of Śramaṇa history and philosophy still defy satisfactory solution despite constant efforts of scholars for decades. Even the etymology and primary meaning of the word Śramaṇa could not be satisfactorily explained.

Like the Greek *telos* and the Vedic *charaṇa*, it seems that the Śramaṇa was originally a tradition of wanderers. Derived from IE √klem > √kram = √śram, the primary meaning of Śramaṇa, Samaṇa is a wanderer. This is borne out by several passages from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, where the verbal forms of the root *śram* occur in collocation of √*char* to move e.g., *śrāmayantaścheruḥ* (1.2.5.7; 1.6.2.3; 1.5.3.3 etc.) and *śrāmyan=chachāra* (1.8.1.7; 1.8.1.10; 25.1.3; 3.9.1.4; 11.1.6.7 etc.). A verse in the Movement Laud (*Ait. Br.*, VIII. 15) renders the meaning pretty clear :—

asya sarve pāpmānaḥ
śrameṇa prapathe hatāḥ.

"All his sins are slain on the road by *śrama* i.e. wandering."

The association of *śrama* with movement is found in a few verses of the *Ṛigveda* also. Thus, *śrama-yuvaḥ padavyaḥ* 'the pedestrian wanderer.'

For determining the connotation of *Śramaṇa*, a study of its cognates in Indo-European languages is pretty useful. The Sogdian *šmn* or *šrmn*, the Khotanese *ṣṣmana* and Sarmanoi of the classical Greek writers, all meaning Buddhist monk are indeed later borrowings from the Prākrit *Samaṇa*. The Slav šamana which means priest, doctor, magician and a person who exorcises evil spirits may or may not be a word of pre-prākrit tradition. But, the Tocharian A. samam and the Tocharian B. samāna both meaning 'active man' (in contradistinction to the Tocharian word 'šaman in the sense of a Buddhist monk) are certainly words of pre-prākrit antiquity. In

the Iranian tradition, Parthian √*cham* to run and Persian √*chanīdan* to stride boldly may be noted along with the Armenian *chemaran* which Bailey translated as 'assembly' of the peripatetics and *chemkan*, the peripatos.

In this context, the Frinno-Ugrian word shaman in the sense of a priest assumes significance. Aulis J. Joki has worked extensively on the lexical similarities between the Finno-Ugrian and the Indo-Iranian languages. Soviet scholars V. I. Abayev and M. S. Asinov have further studied this aspect. The chronology of contacts between these two groups on the basis of linguistic, phonetic and grammatical peculiarities have been attempted by J. Hermatta in a number of publications. Bailey has also mentioned the lexical similarities between the Aryans and the Finno-Ugrians. These mutual borrowings leave little doubt about the contact of the Indo-Aryans and the Finno-Ugrians at a very early stage probably antedating the Ṛigvedic period. Mircea Eliade and Fritz Stall have recently endeavoured to connect the Shamanism in the Slav area with early Indian culture. Here we can hardly discuss in detail the evidence brought forth by them.

This would indicate firstly that Śramaṇa was a wanderer, a peripatetic, secondly that the wandering or peripatos was regarded as a religious practice and thirdly, and this is the most important, that *śramaṇa* practice was current in the proto-Vedic period.

The Śramaṇa had a profile, distinct and different from other Indo-European wandering groups. Like the Śramaṇa the Vedic Charaṇa from the root *char* to move was originally an organization of the Vedic wanderers. But unlike the Śramaṇa the Vedic Charaṇas were devoted to various gods, whom they invoked and to whom they offered oblations. In the primitive Charaṇa the *yajna* was a simple ritual performed by *hotā*, the priest, for invoking and offering oblations.

The Vedic literature indicates three distinct stages in the development of Charaṇas. The primary meaning, of course, is a group of wanderers from which the secondary connotation of persons moving and dwelling together i.e., establishing temporary colonies, devoted to various gods, developed. Thus, in the *Ṛigveda* (IX. 113. 8 and 9) a supplicant desires to have an accomodation in the divine Charaṇa, in the heavenly enclosure where the king Vaivasvata rules. Divine Charaṇas are mentioned in later literature also. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (4.4.4.5), after the completion of the *Samishṭha-*

Yajush sacrifice, the invited gods are dismissed to their respective *Charaṇas—Vyavasrijati yatra yatra yeshāṁ charaṇaṁ*. Again, in the same work (4.4.4.17), it is stated that the *Charaṇa* of Rudra is beyond the Mūjavat mountain.

Then, *Charaṇa* expresses the specific manner of performing rites of devotion and sacrifice to deities. At several places, it is stated that *yadvā vai devānāṁ charaṇaṁ tadvā manushyāṇāṁ* "as is the practice or custom of the gods, so also is the practice or custom of men." This observation, it may be noted, occurs in the context of prescribing various minor rites in the sacrifice. These religious practices were transmitted and remembered through generations. "If in the performance of rites, *charaṇas*, any omission occurs through lapse of memory, smṛiti, O Agni ... protect me' is the prayer of a sage (*AV*, VII, 3, 1).

Lastly, the *charaṇas* were transformed in the Vedic assemblies, paripetos, where different recensions of the Vedas were studied and taught.

It is interesting to note that the semantic development of the Latin root *colore* = Skt. *char* from movement to colony and finally to cult parallels the evolution of the meanings of the root *char* in *charaṇa* from movement to colony and eventually to cults of deities.

Like Latin *colore* and Sanskrit *char* the Greek *telos* is also derived from the Indo- European *quel*, the derivatives of which connote people, group of priests, initiation and social and mystic rites. Wilfred P. Lehmann observes, "If telos is reflex of an early term for people even clan we have another survival of this type of organization in telestos, an initiated person, priest .... The interpretation is supported by related forms such as telete 'sacred office' and in plural 'festival' accompanied by mystic rites." (Linguistic evidence on Diacritic Evidence on Proto-Culture, *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p. 9).

The point so succinctly made by Lehmann requires elaboration. We had an occasion to discuss it elsewhere. In short, it may be stated that *telos* originally indicated the early Greek organization of wanderers. Initiation rite was performed for admission. Like *charana* it eventually became a group of priests with their social and mystic rites.

Thus, the *charaṇa*, the colore-colony-cult and telos-telestos indicate the process which transformed the primitive wanderers into the devotees of cults dedicated to various gods. The bond of common

and traditional rites towards deities was the basis of these organizations.

Returning to the Śramaṇa tradition, we may point out that in the *Atharvaveda* (XI. 1. 30), three distinct religious traditions, presumably of pre-Ṛigvedic antiquity, are mentioned. "Persons through wandering (*śrāmyataḥ*), cooking (*pachataḥ* i.e., the *brahma-odana*) and distilling (*sunvataḥ* i.e. the *soma*) ascend the heaven-going road." There is, of course, no doubt that the soma-distillation was an early Aryan tradition current amongst the Iranians and the Indians along with *haoma-vargā* Śakas mentioned in the Achaemenian inscriptions. The tradition of wandering is casually referred to in the *Ṛigveda* (IV. 33. 11) *na ṛite śrāntasya sakhyāya devāḥ* "excep he who has successfully completed the discipline of *śrama* (wandering), no one deserves to be a comrade of the gods." The idea finds an echo in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (XXXIII, 3) *Indraichcharataḥ sakhā, charaiveti* 'Indra is the comrade of the wanderer. Do thou wander.' *Śrānta* of the Ṛigvedic verse should, therefore, be interpreted in the sense of '*charataḥ*' of the Brāhmaṇa hemistich. It may be noted here that the verse purported to praise the practice of wandering begins with a reference to *āśrānta* one who has fully completed the discipline of *śrama*. *Na-anāśrāntāya śrīrasti*—'glory does not belong to him who is not completely *śrānta*.'

The primitive Śramaṇa tradition was characterised by *brahmachariya* and asceticism besides wandering. In the Pāli literature, *brahmachariya* is mentioned almost as synonym of *Sāmanya* or the essence of *Samaṇa*. Expressing the attainment of the Śramaṇa status, the following verse occurs frequently in the Nikāyas:—

> *Khīnā jāti vushitaṁ brahmachariyaṁ*
> *kataṁ karanīyam nāparam ittathāyā*
>
> —*Majjhima Nikāya*, II, p. 66.

"The birth is eliminated, the discipline of *brahmacharya* is successfully completed. There is nothing beyond."

Again, criticising false doctrines, it is argued that if they are accepted as true, we would be compelled to accept the absurd position that Śrāmaṇya can be obtained even without *brahmacharya*.

Ubhopi mayam ettha samasamā sāmañña patta ... *tasmā brahmachariyā nibijja pakkamehī* (*Majjhima Nikāya*, II, pp. 101–123). "We both i.e., one who follows the discipline of *brahmachariya*, and one who does not follow it, have obtained *śrāmaṇya* in equal measure.

Thinking so, he discards the discipline of *brahmachariya*."

Prof. Rhys Davids and following him B. M. Barua hold the view that "the order of *Śramaṇas* or *bhikhus* originated from brahmachārins." At least this may be asserted with a fair amount of confidence that *brahmachariya* was the most essential and integral part of the Śramaṇa discipline. In this connection, Dr. Goyal has rightly drawn attention to the cult of *brahmachārins* in the *Atharvaveda.*

Associated with *brahmacharya* is, indeed the practice of a *bhikshu,* a word which is generally translated as mendicant. Originally from mendicus, poor and *mendus,* blameworthy, mendicant was, however a poor and blameworthy person begging alms. *Bhikshu,* on the other hand, desires a share (from √*bhiksh* derivative of √*bhaj* to share) in the produce of the earth, which, in fact, is his. The *Atharvaveda* (XI.5.9) states "this broad earth and the sky, the *brahmachārin* first brought as alms (*bhikshā*)."

The practice of *śrama* is closely associated with *tapas* or austerities. At several places in the *Atharvaveda* (IV. 35.2; VI. 133.3; X. 7.36 etc.), *śrama* occurs along with *tapas.* Moreover in the various sects from the Ājivikas to Buddhists, which appeared in the second stage of the development of Śramaṇa tradition, austerities were accepted in varying measures as the core conduct of discipline, indicating thereby that they formed a part of the primitive Śramaṇa tradition.

The Śramaṇas were ascetics in the real sense of the term. Derived from √askein, to exercise self-discipline by way of physical mortification, ascetic from Greek askētikos, Latin asceticus implies physical training, askēsos (*Strabo,* 15.1.61) as a religious practice. The word *tapas* likewise indicates self-discipline through bodily torture. *Tapas* in this sense may not be confused with *tapas* meaning heat. It is a homonym having two different meanings and derived from two different roots. *Tapa* as torture is associated with the old Slav *tep* to strike (*BSOAS,* 26, 1963) and with Pehlvi *tapāh kartan* to destroy, modern Persian *tabāh* bad, ruined.' Here, of course, we cannot discuss in detail the entire range of the usage of the word in the *Ṛigveda,* but incidentally we may draw attention to *tapana* (*RV,* X.34.7), an instrument for torture similar to a goad (*aṅkuśa*) which cuts into flesh *nikṛutvāna*) and which injures (*ni-todana*) the body. In another verse (X.33.2), √tap is used to denote the biting of flesh by mice.

There is hardly any evidence of asceticism or physical mortification as a religious practice in the *Ṛigveda.* However, in the *Atharvaveda,*

it was recognized as a path of spiritual realization. Of the primitive Śramaṇa tradition, asceticism or *tapa* was, of course, an important element.

In fine, the primitive Śramaṇa tradition was a pre-Ṛigvedic Aryan tradition. Unlike other Indo-European tradition of wanderers *charaṇa* and telos it was associated neither with the gods nor with any rite. Nor had it any sacred literature. Positively speaking, it was characterized by *brahmacharya* and asceticism. The *Śramaṇa Saṅgha* consisted of the preceptor and his students who like sophists constantly debated the problems of reality, begged alms and moved from place to place.

In contrast to the theo-centric telos and *charaṇa*, the Śramaṇa organization revolved round the preceptor called *arhata* and *tīrthaṅkara*.

Arhata is derived from the Sanskrit root *arh* > Indo-European root *algu* which primarily sired the words of economic significance such as the Greek *alphe-alphano*, Iranian *arjah* and Sanskrit *argha*, all meaning value and valuable. Allied to it is the cluster of words indicating worth and worthy.

But in an early stage probably in the Indo-Iranian stage, the word *arhata* or its cognate acquired a religious connotation.

In the *Ṛigveda*, *arhan* in general connotes the idea of worshipful, venerable but in particular it denotes Agni, as the proto-type of human priest who officiates at the worship of the gods. Thus, *devān=yajatu=Agniḥ arhan* (2.3.1) "Let Agni, being the *arhan* worship the gods", or *īlito manasā no arhan=devān=yakshi mānushāt=pūrvo* (2.3.3) "you being the *arhan* more ancient than the human priest, when mentally requested worship the gods for us."

The word *arəjī* from √*arəg*=√arh, the Avestan form of *arhat* occurs in the *Yasna* (53.9)—*dus-varənais vaeso rāstī narəpis arəjis* "with infidels, hatred leads to the condemnation of the worthies." Bartholomae in his *Worterbuch* (p. 34, n.1) remarks that these *arəjīs* are the Prophet and his followers. Taraporewala informs us of *arjānī*, a family name among the Zoroastrian Parsis meaning 'believers.'

In the Pāli and Ardhamāgadhī, *arhat* is an enlightened being, a spiritual teacher analogous to a prophet. Buddhaghosha gives a fanciful derivation of the word and yet makes its meaning clear—*arhatā . . . Saṁsāra-chakkas arāṇam hatattā* "*arhatā* consists in the destruction of the spokes of world wheel." (*Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā*,

atha ya ātmā sa setur=vidhṛiti lokānām=asaṁbhedāya.

Chh. Up., 8.4.1.

"Now, the soul is a bridge, the separation for keeping these worlds apart." The idea of separation bridge in the Upanishads might as well be a later introduction under external influences. Anyway, it is the Prophet like Zoroaster who ensures the passage across the bridge from this world. Tīrthaṅkara, the bridge-builder or the ford-maker may be likened to such a Prophet.

In short, the concept of *tīrthaṅkara* is a non-Ṛigvedic and yet pre-Ṛigvedic concept. Since it is found in the majority of the Śramaṇa sects, it might have been a part of the primitive Śramaṇa tradition.

The importance of *arhata-tīrthaṅkara* in the Śramaṇa tradition cannot be overemphasized He singly enjoys the high status which is shared together by the priest and the gods in the Vedic *charaṇas*. The Vedic priest leads the *yajamāna* to the god. The *arhata tīrthaṅkara* leads the seeker to himself or to his own teachings. It is almost a blind alley which stops at the *arhata tīrthaṅkara* who through his teaching ensures the progress of his follower in his journey beyond the miserable world.

In the Vedic fold, it is only in the Upanishads that the importance of *guru* is accepted, but there too he occupies the pedestal with God—*yathā deve tathā gurau* (*Śvet. Up.*, 5.23) a position identical with the Zoroastrian ratus (*ṛitvik*)—*yathā Āhu Vairyo athā Ratus* 'as the omnipotent God so is the priest.'

Here, we may point out another important characteristic of the Śramaṇa tradition—the theory of rebirth "which by the time of the Buddha was almost universally accepted by ordinary people throughout the civilized part of the country" and which is incompatible with the Vedic eschatalogy. Suggestions of Poussin that it is 'a savage speculation' and of S. K. Chatterjee that 'it evinces the proto-Austroloid influence' have been rightly rejected. In this connection, I may point out that the theory of rebirth called *thesmos te Adrasteias* or the Law of Destiny was current amongst the Greek teleste tradition. Discussing the Law of Destiny, Socrates is said to have observed that the soul of a teleste "enters into birth of a man who is to be philosopher or a lover of beauty or one of a musical or loving nature and the second soul into that of a lawful king or a warlike ruler." etc. (*Phaedrus* 248 B.C.).

One wonders whether the theory of rebirth was current amongst some branches of the Indo-European people and brought to India

by the primitive Śramaṇas before the entry of the Ṛigvedic people of Bharatas, Kurus and others in the western part of the country.

In short, these primitive *Śramaṇas* were wandering ascetics of the Aryan stock who migrated to India in pre-Vedic period.

The theory that the Śramaṇa tradition was a continuation of the ascetic and non-ritualistic practices of *Yatis* and *Munis* of the *Ṛigveda* is based on rather doubtful and late evidence.

In the second stage of the development of the Śramaṇa tradition around the eight century B.C. the dichotomy of the Śramaṇas and the Brāhmaṇas developed, which is reflected later in the Aśokan epigraphs and Pāli literature. Although in the *Mahābhāshya* (2.4.9) of Patañjali, the eternal hostility of the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas—*yeshāṁ śāśvatiko virodhaḥ* is mentioned, nowhere in the Pāli literature, where the dichotomy finds frequent references, is such a mutual hostility expressed or suggested. It is a fact that at several places in the *Piṭaka* literature, Brāhmaṇa practices are criticized (*Aṅguttara Nikāya, Brāhmaṇavagga*) but the compound *Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇa* merely indicated them as two categories of spiritual teachers almost without any distinction. For example, in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (8.5.25), it is stated that eastern, southern, western, northern and lower quarters of sphere symbolise respectively father-mother, preceptors, sons-wives, friends-relations, and slaves-servants, whereas the upper quarter is suggestive of Samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas. The dichotomy arose in the Brāhmaṇa period. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* alludes to a controversy raging in contemporary times. It centred round the comparative importance of the two modes of living—(a) the pattern of life adopted by the celebate and ascetic wanderers, and (b) the settled life based on marriage and agriculture. Indra in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa exhorts the Prince Rohita to constantly wander and in the process expounds the philosophy of wandering. Indra says :

Glory of him who is *āśrānta*,
So have I heard O Rohita;
Evil is who stayeth among men,
Indra is the comrade of the wanderer.

He further exhorts Rohita :

The fortune for him who sitteth also sitteth,
But that of him who standeth standeth erect;
That of him that reclineth lieth down,
The fortune of him that walketh shall move indeed.

We may also note the following verse uttered by Indra in the same strain :

Wandering one findeth honey,
Wandering the sweet Udumbara fruit,
Consider the pre-eminence of the Sun,
Who wearieth never of wandering.

Against this philosophy of wandering Nārada expounds the philosophy of settled life, of rearing a family and performing sacrifices. Extolling the Sun, Nārada, in the same legend of Śunaḥśepa, observes

A debt he payeth in him,
And immortality he attaineth,
That father who sees the face
Of a son born living.

Depricating the ascetic and celibate practices Nārada adds :

The (son) is (a ship) well-found to ferry over.
What is the use of dirt, what of goat skin ?
What of long hair what of austerities ?
Seek a son O Brāhmaṇas

"That the whole world is void for one who does not have a son" is the telling refrain of the argument advanced by Nārada. One may find here the evidence of a conflict between the traditional wandering life and the new life-pattern based on the emergent agriculture and permanent rural settlements. Concomitant with this change in economic structure is the tension between two value-systems envisaged through the nomadic life and the social life. The constant wanderer preoccupied with his struggle against nature, wanted to transcend the constraints and limitations of the worldly life with its manifold blemishes. Society was irrelevant to him, and, therefore it did not enter into his philosophical consideration. His primary concern was to cut asunder the worldly life through ascetic measures

Society had its own world-view. In pre-social stage, man in the cosmic hierarchy was insignificant, a little better than a beast or a plant. 'A tree in forest, so surely is man', is the view of man outside society (*Br. Up.*, 3. 9. 28). Torn out of the cosmic hierarchy and placed in social context, man became immensely important. It occupied the centre of the stage. For man in society, the primary values relate to social obligations and duties, that is, the repayment of three

debts to ancestors, sages and the gods.

The Śramaṇa was a wanderer *par excellence* moving with a *gaṇa* of fellow wanderers, discussing the ontological problems relating to the reality of the world and practising celebacy. The Brāhmaṇa, on the other hand, typifies the house-holder performing social and religious duties. Hence, the dichotomy of Śramaṇa and Brāhmaṇa.

The emergence of society and the permanent rural settlements of the Vedic people brought to fore the social man, relegating the traditional wanderer to a marginal position. Here, the social man was confronted with a solitary man, solitary not primarily in the sense of physical isolation but in its spiritual context where he withdraws from society and enters within the depth of his own consciousness to understand his being. Living on the verge of society, both physically and psychologically, he was mainly concerned with a nature of human consciousness. For him, the inner unity of human consciousness transcending physical, vital and psychological aspects was much more important than the outer unity of cosmic consciousness expressed through the concept of *brahman*. The focus, therefore, shifts from *brahman* of the early Vedic age to the *ātman* in the later period.

Thus, in fact, we find three value-systems—the Śramaṇic with emphasis on the evil and transitory character of the world, the Brāhmaṇic with preponderant concern with social duties and responsibilities, and the Upanishadic with its preoccupation with the nature of human consciousness.

The story which unfolds further, with enchanting spectacles, is told comprehensively and in a critical manner by Professor S. R. Goyal who amply deserves our compliments. There are several works on different aspects of Buddhism, but an authoritative book covering the entire spectrum—philosophy, religion, state and society, and which surveys the history from before the rise of Buddhism to the modern times was a long-felt need. Professor Goyal has indeed earned the gratitude of scholars and general readers alike by producing this lucid, critical and comprehensive account. I am sure that it will remain a standard work of reference for decades to come.

Gorakhpur
15.8.1987

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INTRODUCTION

Professor S. R. Goyal does not require any introduction to the world of scholarship. He has made significant contributions of an enduring value. He admirably combines all the qualities associated with the best traditions of scientific scholarship. He has a close familiarity with the vast literature on the subject. He has a rare command over the original sources. He has the gift of analysing minutely all the diverse and possible problems of a subject. The logical presentation, the systematisation of material and above all the fresh and original approach in viewing the problem make his publications the most standard works.

Professor Goyal has worked on a very wide canvas. He has published studies on broad range of subjects including political history, epigraphy and palaeography, numismatics, etc. Of late he has been concentrating on the history of Indian religions. This has led him to delve deeper into various controversies in the long history of Buddhism. This long churning of the material connected with the history of Buddhism has yielded cream of scholarship in the form of the present volume.

Buddhism arose in India. It was the gift of the genius of the Buddha. But it was also the product of its own age. It carried forward the legacies of certain traditions, but at the same time reacted to certain ideas, practices and realities. In the course of its long history Buddhism was influenced by new situations in India as also in many other countries of Asia. In the process it deeply influenced the life of these people but also underwent considerable change in adopting itself to the social, cultural and spiritual needs of the people.

Like any other religion Buddhism could not confine itself to the narrow limits of spiritual, theological and philosophical problems. It had to address itself to many other non-religious subjects of vital concern to its followers. Even the Buddha had to open his mind on topics concerning social, economic and political institutions and realities. On account of its long history and the large number of

people and countries coming under its fold Buddhism, more than any other religion, acquired the character of a distinct culture.

Often specialists tend to pay little attention to the wider dimensions of Buddhism. They concentrate on the history of its religious ideas and practices. Professor Goyal studies Buddhism as a total cultural phenomenon. This helps him project Buddhism in its totality and avoid any partial presentation.

To present Buddhism in its proper historical perspective Professor Goyal begins by analysing the background and origins of Buddhism. This recapitulation is of special significance in view of the recent attempts at tracing the origins of Buddhism in certain revolutionary changes in the material culture, the introduction of iron ploughshare and the tempo of urbanisation. Professor Goyal has chosen to present Buddhism in terms of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, the Triratna. In following the emphasis laid down by Buddhism itself he has been faithful to the norms and structure of the religion itself and has avoided imposing any other model external to it. Professor Goyal delineats the early history of Buddhism from the times of the first Buddhist Council to the emergence of Tāntrika Buddhism. He gives due emphasis to the role of the Councils, the appearance of separate sects and the transformation into Mahāyāna and later into Tāntrika Buddhism. The history of the expansion of Buddhism includes an analysis of the factors that helped it achieve a phenomenal success. Professor Goyal studies *Buddhism in the wider context of Indian culture in its rich variety* of expression. Though there have been some studies on individual aspects, it is here that for the first time we get a total assessment of the impact of Buddhism in giving a specific direction to Indian culture and in enriching different areas of cultural expression. The total personality of Buddhism as a cultural movement has been articulated with a clarity, objectivity and faithfulness deserving due recognition. I would like to make a special reference to the way in which Professor Goyal has underlined the distinguished contribution of Buddhism to the fields of social philosophy, political thought, historiography and philosophy of history and education. To make his study relevant to modern times Professor Goyal continues his narrative down to the movement of neo-Buddhism started by Baba Saheb Ambedkar. The account of the services rendered by Anāgārika Dharmapāla and the Mahābodhi Society of India is to interest

modern readers. A very thorough and judicious analysis of the various factors that contributed to the decline and disappearance of Buddhism is of great merit.

Nine appendices add to the scholarly merit of the publication. These deal with important but debatable issues in the history of Buddhism. They help in removing the cob-web of controversy and confusion woven around the names of some of the distinguished personalities in the history of Buddhism. One appendix concerns Buddhist symbols and Buddha image on ancient Indian coins.

I am sure the present publication will find a permanent place in the possessions of all those who would care to acquire a reliable account of Buddhism, its history and its rich cultural legacy.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It may be regarded as overweeningly audacious presumption on our part to write a book on the history of Indian Buddhism when such a large literature dealing with various aspects of Indian Buddhism is available not only in English but also in many other languages of the world. But some considerations justify our effort. Firstly, there is no book in English, and possibly in other languages as well, which deals with the entire history of Indian Buddhism comprehensively from its origins to recent revival in the form of Ambedkar's neo-Buddhist movement, excepting perhaps small monographs of extremely general nature meant for general public. The present work is perhaps the first detailed account of Indian Buddhism which covers all the stages of the history of this religion in our country from the pre-Buddha origins of Buddhistic ideas to its present-day position in the religious profile of the country. Secondly, our work deals not only with the evolution of Indian Buddhism on traditional lines—life and teachings of the Buddha, the foundation and evolution of the Buddhist saṁgha and its discipline, the first Four Buddhist Councils, the rise of various sects, the origin and development of Mahāyānism and Tāntrikism along with the disappearance of Buddhism after the sack of Nālandā and its partial revival in the recent decades—but also its place in Indian culture. Our work seeks to study Buddhism as a part of general historical and cultural evolution of India and delineate its impact on and contribution to various aspects of Indian culture—philosophy, art, literature, education, political thought, historical thought, social philosophy etc. This approach perhaps may not be found in other histories of Indian Buddhism. Thirdly, our work is not only a narrative of the major episodes in the history of Indian Buddhism, it will also be found, we hope, to be critical and analytical, basing itself on the original source material and at the same time incorporating the results of the latest researches in the subject. An alert reader will note that while discussing the various topics we have made critical and detailed references to the recent-most books and research papers.

We, therefore, believe that our effort will be found useful by scholars of Buddhism as well as historians of ancient Indian culture and religions.

In the preparation of this work I was greatly encouraged and helped by a number of persons. My younger brother Dr. S. K. Gupta, Associate Professor, Department of History and Indian Culture, Rajasthan University, Jaipur, has written the section on Buddhist art in Chapter 19 while my son Mr. Shankar Goyal, M.A. (*Pune*), *wrote a few appendices* (2, 3, 7–9). *I am grateful to both of* them.

The 'Foreword' for the work has been written by Prof. Govind Chandra Pande (Allahabad), 'Preface' by Prof. Vishwambhar Sharan Pathak (Gorakhpur) and 'Introduction' by Prof. Lallanji Gopal (Varanasi). All three of them have put me under their deep obligation, for their respective contributions are themselves pieces of scholarly research, and throw light on and elaborate many obscure points of the Buddhist studies. I extend my heart-felt thanks to these savants.

I also thank M/s Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut, for bringing out this work so promptly and enthusiastically. In the preparation of the Index and Bibliography etc. I was greatly helped by my daughter Km. Vijayashri Goyal, M.A., and daughter-in-law Mrs. Alka Goyal, M.Sc. Both of them deserve my blessings and praise.

Above all, I take pleasure in acknowledging the help of my wife Mrs. Kusum Goyal and son Mr. Shankar Goyal, M.A., both of whom continued to prompt me to complete this work in time and saw to it that I get every convenience they could provide for. I appreciate their contribution in making this venture a success.

For the photographs given in the book and on its jacket, I am obliged and grateful to the authorities of the National Museum, New Delhi.

The system of traslitcration adopted in the book will be apparent from the following examples: Chāṇḍāla, jñāna, tṛshṇā, saṁskāra, Īśvara, Śaṅkara, ṭhākura, pīṭha, Yaśahpāla. Modern proper names of countries, places and individuals have generally been spelt without the use of diacritical marks.

For the errors of omission and commission I seek the indulgence of sympathetic readers.

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S. R. GOYAL

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APPENDICES

LIST OF PLATES

ABBREVIATIONS

AB/Ait. Brā.	Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa
ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona
AIK	The Age of Imperial Kanauj, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
Ait. Upa.	Aitareya Upanishad
AIU	The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
ĀMMK	Ārya Mañjuśrī Mūla Kalpa
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
APP	Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra
AV	Atharvaveda
BCA	Bodhicharyāvatāra
BEFEO	Bulletin de L'Ecole Francaise D'Extreme Orient
BMC,AI	Catalogue of Coins of Ancient India (in the British Museum), by John Allan
BMC,GD	Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśāṅka, king of Gauḍa (in the British Museum), by John Allan
Bṛ. Upa.	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London
CA	The Classical Age, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
CHI	Cultural Heritage of India, 4 Vols. or Cambridge History of India according to context
Chh. Upa.	Chhāndogya Upanishad
Corpus	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III, by J. F. Fleet
DKM	Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha, by B. P. Sinha

DPPN	Malalasekara's Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names
Dh.	Dhammapada
DHI	Development of Hindu Iconography, by J. N. Banerjea
Dhp.	Dhammapada aṭṭhakathā
Dhs.	Dhammasaṅgaṇī
EI	Epigraphia Indica, Delhi
EHI	Early History of India, by V. A. Smith
EHNI	Early History of North India, by S. Chattopadhyaya
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
GST	Guhyasamāja Tantra
HC	Harshacharita of Bāṇa
HD	History of Dharmaśāstra, 5 Vols., by P. V. Kane
HIG	A History of the Imperial Guptas, by S. R. Goyal
HIL	A History of Indian Literature, by M. Winternitz
HK	History of Kanauj, by R. S. Tripathi
HNEI	The History of North Eastern India, by R. G. Basak
IA	Indian Antiquary, Bombay
IC	Indian Culture, Calcutta
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta
JA	Journal Asiatique, Paris
JAHRS	Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajamundry
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven
JASB	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
JBORS	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay
JBHU	Journal of the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
JIH	Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum
JNSI	Journal of Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi

JOI	Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London
JRASB, L	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters, Calcutta
Kh.	Khandha
Kh. N	Khuddaka Nikāya
Kv.	Kathāvatthu
Kv. A.	Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā
Life	The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang, by S. Beal
Lv.	Lalitavistara
MASI	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India
Mbh.	Mahābhārata
MBT	Minor Buddhist Texts, 2 Pts., ed. by G. Tucci
MIC	Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization, by John Marshall
MN	Majjhima-Nikāya
MP	Milinda Pañho
MSS	Mahāyāna Sūtra Saṁgraha, Vol. I, ed. by P. L. Vaidya
Mvg.	Mahāvagga
Mvu.	Mahāvastu
NHIP	A New History of the Indian People, Vol. VI, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar
Num. Chron. (NC)	Numismatic Chronicle
Num. Suppl. (NS)	Numismatic Supplement
Origins	Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, by G. C. Pande
PHAI	Political History of Ancient India, by H. C. Raychaudhuri
PIHC	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
PJ	Prāchī Jyoti, Kurukshetra
POC	Proceedings of the Oriental Conference
PRHC	Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress
PTS	Pali Text Society
Rāmā.	Rāmāyaṇa
RE	Rock Edicts
Record	A Record of the Buddhistic Religion as Practised in India and Malaya Archipelago (A.D. 671–695), by I-tsing

Records	Buddhist Records of Western World, by S. Beal
RHAI	A Religious History of Ancient India, in two Volumes, by S. R. Goyal
RPV	Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads, 2 Vols., by A. B. Keith
RV	Ṛgveda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
SI	Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization, Vol. I, ed. by D. C. Sircar
SN	Saṁyutta Nikāya
Sn.	Suttanipāta
Studies	Studies in Vedic and Indo-Iranian Religion and Literature, by K. C. Chattopadhyaya, 2 Vols., ed. by V. N. Mishra or Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India, by *L. M. Joshi (2nd ed.)* according to context
TA	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
Travels	On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India (A Translation of Yuan Chwang's Hsi-Yu-Chi), by T. Watters
Upa.	Upanishad
Vm.	Visuddhimaggo
Vin.	Vinaya Piṭaka
YV	Yajurveda

Part 1
BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

Chapter 1

PRE-VEDIC AND VEDIC BACKGROUND

Pre-historic and Indus Religious Legacy

Pre-historic Antecedents of Indian Religious Ideas

Linguistic palaeontology and archaeology can tell us but only a little about the religious ideas of prehistoric Indian societies. However it can easily be imagined that in those days, when man's life depended upon hunting, if man at all thought of any supernatural power he must have conceived it in association with his hunting activities. That is why it is believed that the worship of a Father-God as the lord of animals originated much earlier than the worship of Mother-Goddess, the embodiment of fertility, which became popular probably after man started to cultivate crops and domesticate animals both of which are based on the phenomenon of fertility.

Thus in the prehistoric period there originated the concepts of Father-God (associated with hunting) and Mother-Goddess (associated with fertility). Even today throughout India there are found at the folk level rites and festivals which are associated with various agricultural activities and the breeding of cattle. There is also a whole plethora of local gods and goddesses some of whom have remained unassimilated into the great hierarchy of classical Indian gods and goddesses. "There can be no doubt that a very large part of this modern folk religion is extremely ancient and contains traits which originated during the earliest periods of Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlement and expansion."[1] But it is almost impossible to separate these ancient elements from later accretions.

The Indus Civilization

In the second half of the third millennium B.C. the slow cultural evolution in India suddenly flowered into the magnificent Indus Valley Civilization, also called the Harappa Culture. The antecedents of the Indus Civilization were the village sites of the Baluchis-

[1]Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, *The Birth of Indian Civilisation*, p. 309.

tan hills—the Nal culture—and of the Makran coast to west of the Indus delta—the Kulli culture—and some rural communitiesalong the rivers in Rajasthan and the Punjab. The village sites of Baluchistan and Sindh have yielded a large number of terracota female figurines which are generally seen as representations of goddesses.[1] The Indus Civilization, which succeeded these rural cultures, included within its sphere of influence not only the Punjab and Sindh plains watered by the Indus but also northern Rajasthan and the region of Kathiawar. It was marked by extraordinary cultural uniformity, both in time and space. Its cities, which show uniform but highly advanced town-planning, were maintained from the surplus produce of the country. The authors of the Indus Civilization are not yet indentified in terms of race, and their language is not known. As pointed out by Allchins there would appear to be two broad alternatives: that it was authored, however improbably, by the people of Indo-European or Indo-Iranian family or that it is the creation of the Dravidians.[2] However, as Pt. K. C. Chattopadhyaya[3] and Prof. G. C. Pande[4] have maintained, in the present state of our knowledge it is surely fantastic to ascribe its authorship to the Vedic Aryans or to regard it as later than the Vedic age.[5] That the Vedic culture saw its culmination in the age of the Buddha is beyond doubt[6] and the radio-carbon method has almost conclusively proved that, applying the MASCA correction, the dates for early and Mature Indus periods are roughly from 3200 to 2200 B.C. and 2700-2100 B.C. respectively while the Late Harappan period belongs to post-2100 B.C.[7]

[1]Piggot, S., *Prehistoric India*, Ch. IV.

[2]Allchins, p. 157.

[3]Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, II, p. 41 ff.

[4]Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 252.

[5]Cf. also Pusalker, *The Vedic Age*, pp. 197-8; L. Sarup, *IC*, IV; Goyal, *RHAI*, I, pp. 14-5.

[6]It was in the age of the Buddha that the last phase of the composition of the early or 'Vedic' Upanishads was over and shortly afterwards Mahāpadmananda is known to have ended the political supremacy of the Vedic tribal monarchies.

[6]Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, 1968, pp. 139-40.

[7]Lal, B. B. and Gupta, S. P. (eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilization*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 539; Agrawala, D. P., *The Archaeology of India*, London, 1982. Earlier Marshall placed the Indus Civilization in 3250-2750 B C., Gadd in 2350-1700 B.C. and Wheeler in 2500-1500 B.C. Allachin *op. cit.*, p. 140) and B. K. Thapar (*Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, Unesco, 1985, p. 50) place it between 2500 and 1700 B.C.

The discovery of the Indus Civilization has revolutionised our perspective of the religious history of India because now it is certain that some fundamental ideas of Hinduism as well as some primitive beliefs and observances related with heterodox ideologies also, may be traced back to this pre-Aryan pre-Vedic culture. That the people of the Indus Civilization were polytheistic, had reached the stage of anthropomorphism and worshipped their gods both in anthropomorphic and aniconic forms cannot be doubted. It is, however, highly controversial whether their pantheon was male-dominated or female-dominated. According to Marshall it was female-dominated,[1] while according to K. N. Shastri[2] it was dominated by gods. The worship of the mother goddesses in the Indus Civilization is proved by the terracotta female figurines which are found at its various sites (except Lothal). Further light on the worship of mother goddesses in the Indus Civilization is thrown by seals depicting various scenes related with the cult of mother goddess.[3] An oblong terracotta seal found at Harappa, for example, shows on the right side of its obverse a nude female figure upside down with legs wide apart and a plant issuing from her womb. On another seal probably a tree-goddess is depicted. The tree, an *aśvattha*, is recognizable from its leaves. A large number of ring-stones ranging from half an inch to nearly four feet in diameter have also been found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Marshall has rightly suggested that these may be regarded as the representations of *yonī*, the female organ of generation symbolizing motherhood and fertility. When they are juxtaposed with the phalli (which, according to Banerjea, are so realistic that they cannot be explained in any other way[4]) discovered from the same sites, the suggestion of Marshall becomes difficult to be rejected.

Marshall postulated the presence of a great male god in the Indus religion whom he rightly regarded as the proto-type of later Śiva. Allchins are also of the opinion that the stone cult icons, and therefore probably temples also, were dedicated to the same deity.[5] His most significant representations are found on a series of seals.

[1] Marshall, *MIC*, I, p. 48 ff.
[2] Shastri, K. N., *Sindhu Sabhyatā kā Ādikendra—Harappā*, p. 73.
[3] *RHAI*, I, p. 17 f.
[4] *DHI*, p. 169.
[5] Allchins, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

One of these, found from Mohenjodaro (No. 420 in Mackay's list) shows him in a yogic posture (either *padmāsana* or *kūrmāsana*[1]), with eyes in Śāmbhavī *mudrā*.[2] He is sitting on a low throne flanked by antelopes (deer throne). His two arms, covered with bangles,[3] are outstretched and hands rest on his knees. He wears a series of necklaces, and his head is crowned by a pair of horns meeting in a tall fan-shaped head-dress. He is ithyphallic (*penis erectus*; *Ūrdhvamedhū*), has three (or four?) faces and is surrounded by jungle creatures (elephant and tiger on his proper right and rhinoceros and buffalo on the left). Just below the trunk of the elephant is the figure of a man. The identification of the male god depicted on the Mohenjodaro seals has been a matter of great controversy. Saletore[4] suggested that the figure is that of Agni; Jayabhagavan[5] and many Jaina historians[6] believe that he is a Jaina arhant; L. M. Joshi, a Buddhist scholar, suggests that the figure is that of a proto-type of an esoteric adept or siddha (and the famous bronze statue of the 'dancing-girl' is that of a proto-type of Tāntrika yoginī)[7] and K. N. Shastri opines that he is a deity the various organs of whose body were conceived as composed of different animals, though his conception was similar to that of Rudra.[8] According to Herbert P. Sullivan, however, the deity under consideration is not male but female.[9] But now-a-days most scholars such as G. C. Pande, Moraes, R. N. Dandekar etc. agree with Marshall that it is the figure of a god who was a proto-type of later Śiva.[10] K. A. Nilakanta

[1]Banerjea (*op. cit.*, p. 159) describes it as *kūrmāsana* while Pusalker calls it *padmāsana* (*The Vedic Age*, p. 190).

[2]Pande, G. C., *op. cit.*, p. 256. Wheeler (*The Indus Civilization*, p. 64) doubts the significance of narrowed eyes.

[3]According to K. N. Shastri the arms are composed of centipedes (Hindi, kānakhajūrās). But he is wrong. Cf. the statue of the 'dancing girl' only the left arm of which is covered with bangles. Covering the whole arm with bangles is still a popular fashion in western Rajasthan and Sindh.

[4]Quoted by Dandekar in *Rudra in the Veda*, p. 42, n. 3.

[5]*Anekānta*, X, pp. 433–56.

[6]Mehta, M. L., 'Antiquity of Jain Culture', *Marudhara Kesarī Muniśrī Miśrīmalaji Abhinandana Grantha*, p. 3.

[7]*PIHC*, 1964, p. 115 ff.

[8]Shastri, *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 83.

[9]*History of Religion* (Chicago), IV, No. i, 1964, pp. 115-25.

[10]Pande, *loc. cit.*; Dandekar, *Rudra in the Veda*, Poona, p. 42 ff.; Moraes, quoted by Dandekar, p. 43, n. 3; Wheeler, M., *ibid.*, 1976, p. 103.

Sastri doubts it though he admits the antiquity of yoga.[1] To us also Marshall appears to be right in his belief that most of the features associated with this god are found in Śiva of later times who is usually described as *Trimukha* (or *Chaturmukha*), *Paśupati* (the Lord of the Animals), *Yogīrāja*, and as sitting on a deer-throne. His special weapon (*āyudha*) is triśūla or trident which may or may not have something to do with the three-pronged horned head-dress.

The suggestion that the god with three-pronged head-dress depicted on Seal No. 420 etc. is the proto-type of later Śiva is strengthened by a number of other factors. Firstly, in the Paurāṇika Hinduism Śiva is worshipped both in human and phallic forms. Now, as we have seen above, numerous stone phalli were found at the various Indus Culture sites. Their connection with the god depicted on the seal is indicated by the *penis erectus* of the deity of the seal. Secondly, Śiva is intimately associated with Nāgas and on one seal Nāgas have been shown with the deity sitting on a throne in Yogic posture. The fact that the Indus people worshipped a proto-type of Śiva and also a Mother Goddess, who in the Paurāṇika religion figures as the Śakti and wife of Śiva, indicate in the same direction.

In all, as Fairservis has said, there is a religious quality to the Indus Civilization that is difficult to be ignored. From the individual's birth to death one can detect its traces. The evidence for *liṅga* worship, the depiction of pregnancy, the depiction of the birth of plant from the womb of the deity, the find of a *liṅga* in a jar at Harappa, the representation of animal, and even human sacrifices, all these strongly suggest cults related to regeneration and fertility. The formal processions, ablutions of the Great Bath, priesthood suggested by sculptures, use of horned head-dresses, iconographic elements such as man-tiger, tree-deities, 'Gilgamesh' motif—all these prove the complexities of myths and rites connected with a variety of powers not fully known today.

Relation of the Indus Religion with Later Indian Religious Traditions

The Indus religion never died out completely. There were many traits of this religion which reappeared in the religion of later Vedic age and in the Indian religious traditions of subsequent epochs. Firstly, the Indus religion contributed to the emergence of iconic or

[1] *CHI*, II, pp. 65–7.

image worship in Indian religions. It was something new for the Vedic Aryans. Similarly the worship of gods in the form of symbols such as *liṅga* and *yoni*, so common in Hinduism, was also a contribution of the Indus religion. Secondly, goddesses are of almost no consequence in the Vedic religion;[1] therefore their emergence as important deities in the Paurāṇika Hinduism should be regarded as the result of the impact of the Indus religion. Thirdly, the Indus religion contributed the concept of a Great God, who convincingly shares many traits of the later Śiva being a *Trimukha* (three-faced), *Ūrdhvameḍhū*, *Yogīrāja* and *Paśupati*, who was conceived in human and also probably in *liṅga* form, and who was associated with *nāgas* (snakes), *vṛshabha* (bull), horns, and probably trident or *triśūla*. He was perhaps also regarded as an archer and *Naṭarāja*. He was most likely regarded as the husband and brother both, of the Mother-Goddess.[2] Therefore the evolution of the Rudra-Śiva and Mother-Goddess concepts in the later Vedic and post-Vedic ages was largely the result of the impact of the Indus religion. The knowledge of yoga among the Indus people is also extremely significant and one of their major contributions to Indian religions. In a way, at least indirectly, the origins of the Upanishadic, Buddhist and Jaina speculations may be traced back to the Indus Valley period. It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Sāṁkhya theory of two eternal principles—one male (*purusha*) and other female (*prakṛti*)—was influenced by the co-existence in the Indus religion of the Father-God and Mother-Goddess cults. Thus, "Paradoxically it would appear that the Indus Civilization transmitted to its successors a metaphysics that endured, whilst it failed utterly to transmit the physical civilization which is its present monument."[3] According to Prof. G. C. Pande the Indus Civilization gives evidence of both the aspects of Indian culture—*Pravṛtti dharma* and *Nivṛtti dharma*. In the worship of the Great Mother one can discern the worship of the creative principle, of Mother Earth, of Nature in its fertility which all over the ancient world belonged to the religion of *Pravṛtti*. At the same time the worship of Paśupati, seated in the midst of beasts, clearly reminds one of the Yogic tradition of *Nivṛtti*.[4] Taking all in all, there is no doubt whatever that there is

[1] *RHAI*, I, p. 67.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 24–9.
[3] Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 95.
[4] Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, Ahmedabad, 1978, p 6.

much in the Harappan religion that continued in and moulded the shape of subsequent Indian religious ideas and institutions.

Vedic Religious Tradition

Chronology of the Vedic Literature

The religion of the Vedic Aryans, who dominated the Indian scene after the decline and collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization, is known from their literature. Generally speaking, Sanskrit literature may be classed under two broad categories : Vedic and non-Vedic (or rather post-Vedic). The Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upanishads are included in the Vedic literature,[1] while the Sūtras, Smṛtis, Epics, classical literature, philosophical works, commentaries and manuals, these all come under post-Vedic literature. No one now doubts that the *Ṛgveda* is the most ancient document of the Aryans. But despite the universal agreement on this point, there is still a diversity of views regarding its probable age. Max Müller assigned it approximately to 1,200 B.C. and his view has been very popoular, specially among Western Indologists, though Whitney calls the period from 2,000–1,500 B.C. as the period of the oldest hymns.[2] It should be remembered that nowhere in the ancient world extending from India to Europe the Indo-Europeans (of whom the Vedic Aryans were a branch) are seen before c. 2,000 B.C. For example the Kassites in Babylon, the Hittites in Anatolia and the Mycenaeans in Greece—all make their appearance in the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Therefore the advent of the Aryans in India and the beginning of the composition of the *Ṛgveda* cannot be placed much earlier than 2,000 B.C. On the other hand, it cannot have taken place much later than this date because otherwise the occurrence of the names of the Vedic gods in the Boghazköi documents in c. 1,400 B.C. would become inexplicable. Thus the view that the advent of Aryans in India and the composition of the *Ṛgveda* began in c. 2,000 B.C. harmonizes well with the evidence of archaeology, Vedic philology, ancient Indian history and West Asian history.[3] As regards the upper limit for the composition of

[1]For the Vedic literature vide Max Müller, *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (reprinted, 1968); Weber, *History of Indian Literature* (reprinted, 1961); Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature* (reprinted, 1962); Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I (reprinted, 1972).

[2]For detailed discussion, vide *RHAI*, I, p. 47 ff.

[3]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

the Vedic literature it is generally and rightly believed that its composition was almost over by the sixth century B.C. It may, however, be once again emphasized that the dates of the various Vedic texts overlap each other so much so that while the beginning of the *AV* is regarded almost as early as that of the *RV* (though the bulk of the *AV* may be later than the bulk of the *RV*), the *RV* in its present form is also regarded as containing materials of the latest *period* of the Vedic literature.[1]

In the recent years Dr. Lal Mani Joshi[2] has sought to prove extremely late dates for the Vedic texts. His views need a brief discussion because they have a direct bearing on the origin and antiquity of Buddhistic ideas. Lal Mani Joshi suggests that the gods of the Mitannians mentioned in the famous Boghaz köi inscriptions of c. 1,400 B.C. represent the stage of Aryan history when the Iranians and Indo-Aryans 'had not yet been separated'; that these gods found their place in Vedic Aryan pantheon 'later on' (that is after 1400 B.C.); that 'the beginning of Vedic literary tradition may be placed a few centuries later' than 'the fall of the Harappan cities in about the middle of the second millennium B.C.'; that the date of the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* of the *Yajurveda* 'is not later than say 600 B.C.'; that the Brāhmaṇas 'were compiled possibly between the eighth and fifth centuries B.C.' though later portions of several Brāhmaṇas may have been added 'in a post-Buddhist century' and that there is 'no conclusive evidence to place even the oldest Upanishads in a pre-Buddhist era'. The '*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya* can perhaps be assigned to the fifth century B.C.' but the other Upanishads, namely *Taittirīya*, *Kaṭha*, *Kena*, *Aitareya*, *Kaushītakī*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna* and *Śvetāśvatara* perhaps belong 'to the fourth and third centuries B.C.' and the *Mahānārāyaṇa*, *Maitrāyaṇī* and *Māṇḍūkya* 'to the first centuries of Christian era', that is to the age of the Kushāṇas.[3] The anxiety of this Buddhist scholar to assign latest possible dates for the Vedic literature is matched only by his desire to prove the antiquity and deep influence of the ideas and institutions connected with Buddhism. He makes the strange suggestion[4] that Kanakamuni Buddha and his successor Kaśyapa (the 'past'

[1]Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Studies*, II, pp. 16-24.

[2]*History of Punjab*, Patiala, 1977; *Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism*, Kandy, 1970.

[3]*History of Punjab*, pp. 142-52.

[4]Joshi, L. M., in *Buddhism*, Patiala, 1969, p. 2.

Buddhas who were conceived at a very much later date) were in all likelihood real human figures and in all probability flourished in 900 B.C. and 800 B.C. He everywhere appears to start with the strange assumption that every idea or institution which has even a remote similarity with Buddhist ideas or institutions must have been the result of the influence of this religion, and hence was later than the date of the Buddha. He seems to believe that the Aryans contributed virtually nothing except the cult of sacrifice. He even tries to ascribe extreme antiquity to the esoteric practices later followed by the Tāntrika Buddhist Siddhas, so much so that he regards the male-god depicted on the famous Paśupati seal found from Mohenjodaro as 'the proto-type of an esoteric Adept or Siddha' and the well-known bronze statue of the 'dancing-girl' found from the same site as 'the prototype of tāntric yoginī'.[1] We think it quite justifiable if somebody traces the antiquity of Śramaṇic ideas back to the Vedic and the Indus Civilizations, but it is in deed too much if a person tries to prove the existence of the Tāntrika Siddha tradition in the Indus Civilization. It merely proves that a deliberate attempt is being made to prove the antiquity of a particular aspect of Indian religious tradition. The theory that the composition of the *RV* began several centuries after the middle of the second millennium B.C. and that all the Vedic Upanishads were composed after the fifth century B.C. and some in the Kushāṇa age is the other aspect of the same mentality. As is well-known, with the extermination of the Vedic Kshatriya dynasties by Mahāpadmananda in c. 400 B.C., the Vedic Age finally came to an end. Now the entire North India was politically dominated by the rulers of the Śūdra and Vrātya extraction. Even the political condition of the age of the Buddha is obviously posterior to the political condition as reflected in the Upanishads which speak of Kāśī as independent kingdom and of kings Aśvapati, Janaka, Pravāhaṇa Jaivalī, etc. who must be placed long before the sixth century B.C. when North Bihar was dominated by the Vajjis or the Lichchhavis and Kāśī had ceased to exist as an independent state. The Upanishadic Janaka cannot in any case be placed later than Karāla Janaka whose downfall led to the fall of the Videhan monarchy and establishment of the Vajji republic which must have occurred more than a century earlier than the age of the Buddha. The Ajātaśatru of the Upanishads obviously belonged to the famous

[1]Joshi, L. M., 'Protohistoric Origins of Esoterism in India', *PIHC*, 1964, pp. 115–20.

Brahmadatta dynasty of Benaras which also ruled earlier than the age of the Buddha. The language of the Upanishads is obviously later than the language of the *Ṛgveda*, but at the same time it is also anterior to classical Sanskrit and many older usages, belonging to the pre-Pāṇinian age, are found in it. It is much akin to the prose of the Brāhmaṇas which, therefore, must be regarded as older than the age of the Buddha and Pāṇini.[1] Actually except the *Maitrāyaṇī* and the *Māṇḍūkya* Upanishads, none of the early or 'Vedic' Upanishads can be assigned to the post-Vedic period.[2] The argument that H. C. Raychaudhuri used to determine the date of the Mahābhārata War[3] and which has been rather misused by Joshi to prove the lateness of the Upanishads is obviously wrong. According to this argument Guṇākhya Śāṅkhāyana, mentioned in the *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka* was separated from the time of Uddalaka Āruṇi by two generations only and from Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna Pāṇḍava, by seven or eight generations. Raychaudhuri placed Guṇākhya Śāṅkhāyana in the sixth century and, assuming that the average length of a patriarch may be about 30 years, placed Parikshit in the ninth century B.C. But he forgot that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, the *Vaṁśa Brāhmaṇa* and the *Jaiminiya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa* also contain these *vaṁśa* lists in which 40 or more generations of patriarchs are enumerated. Therefore if Uddālaka Āruṇi of these lists will be placed only two generations earlier than the sixth century B.C. then the last member of these lists, and therefore the final composition of these texts, will have to be placed more than a thousand years later—that is in the Gupta age. That will be an absurd position to adopt.

General Features of the Ṛgvedic Religion

Be that as it may, it is obvious that the composition of the major portion of the *RV* took place centuries earlier than the composition of the later Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇa works though some portions of the *RV* may be quite late in origin.[4] Therefore the religious atmosphere of the Ṛgvedic or Early Age period was different from

[1] *The Vedic Age*, p. 471.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 471-2.
[3] *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 35 ff.
[4] Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, II, p. 21 "We should take the *Ṛgveda Saṁhitā* in its present form as containing materials from the earliest to (almost) the latest periods of Vedic literature."

the religious atmosphere of the Middle Vedic Age (that is the period of the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇa texts) which in turn was different from the atmosphere of the Later Vedic or Upanishadic period.

A striking trait of the Vedic religion (including the religion of the *Ṛgveda* and of the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas) is its practical and utilitarian character. The sūktas, though highly poetic in nature, are at the same time meant to be recited or sung by the purohitas or bards on occasions of sacrifice. The priest offers prayers and oblations of soma or ghī, and in return expects rewards for his *yajamāna* from the gods, such as long life, prosperity, livestock, warlike sons, and so on. In the words of Bloomfield "Reciprocity frank, unconditional reciprocity, becomes an accepted motive."[1]

The Vedic religion is frankly *pravṛtti mārgī* or this-worldly. It assures the worshippers or house-holders not immortality or heaven, but a long life of full hundred years, prosperity, warlike offspring, in short, all the pleasures of this world. Conquest of enemies, freedom from diseases, abundance of food and drinks seem to be the most desirable objects for the Vedic Aryans. It is only very rarely that immortality (*amṛtattva*) or dwelling with gods in heaven (*svarga*) is referred to.

Another feature of the Vedic religion is that it is essentially a religion of priests.[2] The priests enjoy a very important position in the ritual. They are mediators between princes and gods. They propitiate gods with prayers and offerings and, thus pleased, the gods actually take part, as it were, in the combat of humans and make their favoured party victorious. Sometimes both the combatants pray the same gods for assistance, but the gods help the party whom they favour, and the other party is vanquished. The spiritual idea that he who has God on his side obtains success or victory, thus seems to be present here.

The Vedic region was the religion of the upper classes. It presupposes an established household of considerable extent, a wealthy householder, expensive materials, and many priests not at all ashamed of their demand for large fees. It was definitely different from the popular religion or the religion of the poor masses with its humble rites and reliance upon magic and medicine man, the

[1]Bloomfield, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 184.
[2]Keith, A. B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 55.

description of which is found in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Gṛhya sūtras.*

Ṛgvedic Sacrifice

Vedic religion was essentially a religion of *yajña* or sacrifice. The worshipper offered some oblations to god with the chanting of prayers and expected that god would grant him desired boon in return. Thus, as noted earlier, it was relationship of give and take between god and man. There were in main two varieties of sacrifices:

(1) *Gṛhyakarmāṇi* : Certain hymns and verses of the *RV* were used as benedictions and prayers at birth, marriage and other occasions of daily life, at funerals and ancestor-worship, as well as at ceremonies for ensuring the fertility of the cattle and the growth of fruits in the field. These ceremonies, called gṛhyakarmāṇi, were associated with *yajñas* of the simplest type, namely offering of milk, grain, ghī, or flesh cast into the fire.

(2) *Śrauta Sacrifices* : These were especially performed in connection with the Soma-cult relating to Indra which could only be undertaken by *maghavan* (aristocratic and wealthy men) and kings. These required comparatively extensive sacrificial area with three altars (*chitis*) for the three sacred fires, and a host of priests headed by four chief priests who received liberal payment (*dakshiṇā*) for the joint performance of numerous elaborate and intricate rites and ceremonies on behalf of the *yajamāna* (sacrificer). The *yajamāna* did very little himself. Animal sacrifices are indicated by the āprisūktas. The Purusha sūkta does not describe an actual human sacrifice, but merely preserves, in all probability, the memory of it.

The Ṛgvedic Gods

The humanized gods of the *Ṛgveda* shared human weaknesses and were evidently regarded as susceptible to flattery and gifts. A full meal was certain to win divine favour. Thank-offerings were known. It was the expectation of rewards that chiefly inspired the offering of prayers and oblations in the *Ṛgveda.* However, in the *Ṛgveda,* the sacrifice is as yet only a means of influencing the gods in favour of the offerer. The conception of gods as subject to control by the worshipper, if he only knew the correct means, had not yet developed.[1]

The Ṛgvedic poets were deeply impressed by the apparently

[1]*The Vedic Age*, p. 381.

mysterious working of the powerful forces of nature, the unexplained mysteries of whose working invests them with almost a 'supernatural' or divine character. They looked upon these various natural forces as divinities and natural events as actions of personified beings.[1] The religion of the Ṛgvedic *ṛshis* was thus in the beginning essentially a polytheistic one in which natural forces were deified and worshipped as gods.

Probably in the Indo-European period itself there had arisen the conception of anthropomorphic deities of the sky, such as Dyaus, Mitra, or the Aśvins.[2] Consequently the great gods of the Ṛgveda were conceived as human, as men with supernatural power, free from death but still as subject to birth and similar to human beings in their family relationships. However, the Vedic pantheon does not have the clear cut personalities of the Greek pantheon and unlike the Greek gods and goddesses it is usually quite easy to see that their anthropomorphic form is only a faint veil over their natural element.

The degree of anthropomorphism found in the Vedic gods is extremely variable. In some instances the active element is constantly present. For example, the waters are indeed goddesses, but they are also wholesome to drink; the goddess Ushā is described as a beautiful maiden but she also appears as the natural dawn. Sūrya, the sun, is born as the child of the sky but the constant presence of the natural sun hinders the development of his anthropomorphic form. The same consideration affects Agni who never succeeds in becoming free from his element of fire.

Indra, on the other hand, is one of those gods who had become more or less emancipated from the phenomena which produced their conception. Perhaps the Vedic ṛshis themselves did not remember the natural element he symbolised. Varuṇa is freer still from traces of his natural element. The Aśvins have also lost every trace of their origin in nature.

While discussing the question of the form of gods (*atha ākāra chintanaṁ devatānām*) Yāska states that there were three different views on this subject—that the gods have human forms, that they

[1]For a detailed survey of the various views on the nature of the Vedic gods see R. N. Dandekar, 'Vedic Religion and Mythology', *Journal of the University of Poona*, No. 21, pp. 1–53.

[2]Keith, A. B., *op. cit.*, p. 58.

do not have human forms, and that they have partly human forms and partly not. This fact is an additional proof of the arrested personification of the Vedic deities.

While most of the Vedic nature gods are normally conceived as anthropomorphic, theriomorphic conceptions of the deities are also found. It was asserted by Oldenberg that in the earlier periods of religion theriomorphic conceptions were more frequent than anthropomorphic; but, according to Keith, there is no proof for such a theory.[1] Two deities are recorded for us in animal form only, the one-footed goat (Aja Ekapād) and the serpent of the deep (Ahi Budhnya).

Beside the concrete figures of the great nature gods there were deities with definitely limited functions, though they were also conceived as nature powers. Of such deities we have good examples in the Kshetrasyapati and Vāstoshpati. A further development of this attitude of mind gives us gods who have no immediate concrete background of any kind such as Wrath and Speech. With them may also be mentioned such figures as Savitṛ, Dhatṛ, Trātṛ and Tvashṭṛ who are agent gods, who impel, create, protect and produce.[2]

The worship of natural objects, whether celestial, ethereal or terrestrial, should be distinguished from the reverence paid to earthly objects or animals, which are deemed to be filled with the divine spirit for a certain purpose and in certain conditions. The reverence paid by the purohita to his offering implements, such as the pressing stones and the offering post, and the sacred strew on which the god is invited to take his seat are supposedly filled with the divine touch for the period of the offering. At one place in the *RV* a poet says : "who will buy this my Indra for ten cows? When he hath conquered his foe, let him return it to me".[3] According to Keith in this passage some fetish of Indra, either a rough anthropomorphic picture or something much ruder, is meant. The latter alternative has, however, the greater probability, for the statues of the deities are otherwise not hinted at until the end of the Vedic period.[4]

[1]Keith, A. B., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
[2]Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
[3]*RV*, IV, 24.10.
[4]Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

Religion of the Middle Vedic Age

The period when the Saṁhitās of the *Sāmaveda, Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* and the majority of the Brāhmaṇa texts were composed may be designated as the Middle Vedic Age. Roughly it falls in between the period of the composition of the greater part of the *Ṛk Saṁhitā* on the one hand and of the Upanishads on the other, though the process of the composition of the later portions of the Saṁhitās of the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda* also continued in this period. The Āraṇyakas were composed during the period of transition from the Middle Vedic Age to the Later Vedic Age, that is the age of the Upanishads.

Supremacy of the Yajña Dharma

The Middle Vedic Age may easily be described as the Grand Age of the Cult of Sacrifice. In the Early Vedic or Ṛgvedic Age the cult of sacrifice was simple. There were daily and periodical sacrifices, such as the morning and evening offerings, the New and Fullmoon sacrifices and the four monthly or seasonal sacrifices. There were also a number of domestic ceremonies that inspired religious sanctity to the various events in the life of a family, such as birth, marriage, funeral, ancestor-worship, house-building, cattle-feeding, and farming. In these domestic varieties of the sacrificial cult, the *gṛhapati* himself generally officiated as the priest, though he could call in a regular *purohita* if he felt the need of help. The development of the cult of the Grand Sacrifices, especially the Soma-sacrifices, had only begun. But now, in the Middle Vedic Age, they were elaborately developed and systematized. The *Sāmaveda* and *Yajurveda* Saṁhitās were compiled solely for use in these Grand Sacrifices, called Śrauta Sacrifices. Further, a regular science of sacrifice was now evolved. It is the main subject-matter of the Brāhmaṇa texts.

The Grand Sacrifices were fundamentally different from domestic sacrifices. In them three sacred fires, instead of one, were necessary. Altars or *chitis* for these were erected on a vast sacrificial place set up according to rules and to the accompaniment of an elaborate ritual. A large number of priests, divided into four groups headed by four chief priests, were required for the correct performance of the extremely complicated and elaborate ritual. The *yajamāna* himself did almost nothing except giving liberal *dakshiṇā* to the priests. The Śrauta sacrifices were "based on śruti", whereas the domestic or Gṛhya sacrifices were smārta, that is based on *smṛti* or 'memory'.

Later they were described in the the Gṛhya-sūtras, which fall in the category of the Smṛti literature.

Traditionally the Śrauta sacrifices are divided into Haviryajñas and Somayajñas. The Haviryajñas consist of Agnihotra, Darśa-Pūrnamāsa, the Chāturmāsyas, Āgrayaṇa, animal sacrifices, Sautrāmaṇī and the Piṇḍapitṛyajña. The Soma sacrifices are also divided into seven—Agnishṭoma, Atyagnishṭoma, Ukthya, Shoḍāṣhī, Vājapeya, Atirātra and Āptoryāma. They are further classified into Ekāhas, Ahīnas and Sattras. Aśvamedha and Rājasūya were among the most important Soma sacrifices.[1]

The nature of the Vedic sacrifice has been interpreted by various scholars variously—as ancestor-worship, gift-offering, fertility rite, communion with the deity, etc. As G. C. Pande[2] has pointed out, it is possible to bring together some evidence in support of each of these views from the ritual texts. For example, the Piṇḍapitṛyajñas have an obvious connection with ancestor-worship, the practice of 'Iḍābhakshaṇa' contains the idea of communion with the deity and the Aśvamedha preserves the traces of fertility rites. However, by the Middle Vedic Age all these strands had become intricately involved. Now the priests stressed the idea of the majesty of sacrifice over and above the gods themselves. In the age of the *RV* it was believed that the sacrifice was a means for propitiating gods, but it depended entirely on their will whether or not they gave the desired boon in return for the *bali* offered to them. "I give thee, O God, that thou mayest give", was the theory. This theory was virtually given up in the Middle Vedic Age. Now sacrifice was lauded into a super-divine cosmic principle. 'Yajñapurusha' is the final essence of creation; its potency is incalculable. 'Engaged in sacrifice one becomes more than man. Sacrifice is indeed Vishṇu, it is Prajāpati, it is the navel of the universe, it is essential for creation and on it even gods depend'.[3] Such ideas are frequently met with in the literature of this period. The building of the *chitis* or altars for the sacred fire reflected in a mystic sense the new conception of the unity of universe with the mode of its preservation. According to Eggling it symbolized the reconstruction of the Universe in the shape of Prajāpati.

[1]Pande, G.C., *loc cit.*, p. 274 See pages 275-7 of Pande's work for a brief description of these sacrifices For details, see Keith, *op. cit*, pp. 313-57; also see Pandey, U.C, 'Vedic Sacrifice', *Bhāratī*, VI, Pt 2, pp 105-8

[2]Pande, G.C., *loc. cit.*, p. 274 and n. 118

[3]For references, *ibid.*, p. 277.

The new philosophy of sacrifice transformed the religious outlook of the Vedic Aryans. Firstly, now the spontaneity or simplicity of religious feeling that we find associated with the sacrifice in the age of the *Ṛgveda* is no longer there. The age represented by the *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* is an age of forms, concerned more with the externals of religion than its spirit. Symbolic significance is attached even to the smallest details.

Secondly, the priests because of being the custodians of the cult of sacrifice now arrogated to themselves such powers in this regard that they claimed that they could not only force the gods to do what they liked, they could also ruin (if they pleased) even the patron for whom they officiated by deliberately committing errors. Now the efficacy of the sacrifice depended on the correct pronunciation of the mantras recited, for it was their sound rather than their meaning that was credited with power. The *viniyoga* or liturgical application of the Ṛgvedic sūktas to the details of the sacrifice had now no relation to their meaning,

Changes in the Vedic Pantheon

In the Middle Vedic Period the tendency to discover the underlying unity among gods continued leading to a clearer recognition of a supreme deity. He is sometimes called Prajāpati. According to *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* Agni is all gods, while according to the *Śatapatha* the various gods are only the rays of the supreme light which is Prajāpati or Indra. But quite often the supreme deity is given an impersonal turn by being identified with Yajña.[1]

As a result of the new concept of sacrifice, the pre-eminence of gods was bound to suffer. If the sacrifice is the only power that matters and if it can bend the gods to the will of the sacrificer, the gods cannot be of much importance. As a result, some of the minor deities of the *Ṛgveda* either completely disappeared or continued to exist in name only. Prajāpati (as 'Lord of Creatures') is the main subject of speculation in the Brāhmaṇa texts but he was not 'a god of the people'. The 'god of the people' was Rudra. This is obvious from his description in the *Yajurveda* and the *Aitareya*, *Kaushītaki* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas*. Rudra as Bhūtapati is a dreaded figure. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* he usurps the dominion of Prajāpati over all cattle, when the latter committed incest with his daughter. In all

[1]For references, see Pande, *loc. cit.*, p. 279.

probability Rudra of the *Yajurveda* and Brāhmaṇa texts is not merely a development of the Ṛgvedic Rudra, but an adaptation of him by amalgamation with several popular gods of the non-Aryans, including the Indus Paśupati. In any case, now he emerges as the 'Great God' (*Mahādeva*) and receives the appellation "Śiva" (the "Auspicous One"), of which the latter became his chief name.

Next to Rudra comes Vishṇu, who, as noted above, is identified with the all-important sacrifice. He, therefore, rises to a high position. Probably he claimed undivided allegiance of some localities while Rudra was worshipped in others. Nārāyaṇa and Vishṇu are brought into relation with each other in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*. Later on they were completely identified.

A new development in the Vedic pantheon is the gradual emergence of goddesses as an important factor. Now, probably as a result of the non-Aryan impact, casual reference is made to Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā and Umā. The wives of the gods, only occasionally mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, find established place in the Brāhmaṇas. Rākā and Sinīvālī are connected respectively with the full moon and new moon. Vāk, mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, acquires a more concrete form in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in which she is mentioned as a goddess of learning. In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* she is described as the wife of Indra. The *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā* identifies her with Sarasvatī. The *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* makes her wife of Prajāpati. Ambikā, appears as the sister of Rudra in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*. But in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* she is his wife. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* she is also mentioned as Durgā Vairochanī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī.[1]

Some other changes in the Vedic patheon may here be noted. Gandharvas, Apsarās, Nāgas, etc., are now raised to a semi-divine position. Snake-worship, which was borrowed probably from the Indus people and aboriginal tribes, becomes more popular. The motif of the Devāsura battle makes its appearance. There is a gradual evolution of the concept of Brahman. At first it meant the 'prayer-verses and formulae' containing secret magic power by which man seeks to bend the divine beings to his will. Next it came to mean the *trayīvidyā* which contains these prayers and formulae. Then it meant the first created thing, and finally in this period it came to signify the 'creative principle', the cause of all existence.

Such an evolution of meaning of the word Brahman was possible

[1]For references, see Bhattacharya, N. N., *The Indian Mother Goddess*, p. 100.

because, in this age, the divine origin and authority of the Vedas was unquestionably accepted. In the *Purushasūkta*[1] the act of creation is treated as a sacrifice completely offered (*sarva-hut*) from which the three Vedas arose.[2] According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[3] the Self-Existent breathed out the Vedas. The so-called authors of the Vedas were just inspired poets (*ṛshis*) to whom the divine revelation was communicated. The theory that *śabda* or 'articulate sound' is eternal is correlated to the fact that the Vedas are communicated by word of mouth through untold generations.

Other Aspects of the Middle Vedic Religion

As regards moral ideas, the central ethical teaching of the Brāhmaṇas is that life is a duty and a responsibility. Man is born with certain debts (*ṛṇas*) which he must pay in his life. He has a debt to pay to the gods (*deva ṛṇa*) to the ṛshis (*ṛshi ṛṇa*) and to the manes (*pitṛ ṛṇa*). He can discharge them if he worships the gods, studies the Veda and performs funeral ceremonies, is hospitable to guests and offers *bali* to the *bhūtas*. The Brāhmaṇas have a remarkable sacrifice—the Sarvamedha—wherein everything is sacrificed to attain the freedom of spirit.

There are hints even in the Brāhmaṇas that excessive ritualism was bringing about a reaction. For example, in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*[4] asceticism is held up as a great ideal, while in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is said that knowledge is more valuable than sacrificial gifts or asceticism.[5] The idea that confession implying repentance somewhat mitigates the sin is seen in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Inner purity is regarded as important as external purity. Truth in words and deeds, performance of *dharma* (duty), respect of parents, love of fellow-beings and abstinence from theft, adultery, and murder are regarded as necessary for moral life.

The description of heaven and hell as found in the *RV* is elaborated in the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas. But its essentials are the same. The two paths—one of the Devas (*Devayāna*) and the other of the Pitṛs (*Pitṛyāna*), foreshadowed in the *RV*, are mentioned. The attainment of immortality and the company of the gods in the

[1] *RV*, X. 90.
[2] *The Vedic Age*, p. 448.
[3] *ŚB*, XI.5 8. 1 ff.
[4] *TB*, III.12 3.
[5] *ŚB*, X.5.4 16.

heaven (*svarga*) is the deeply cherished aim of life. However, the *Śatapatha*, *Jaiminīya* and *Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇas* elaborate the horrid picture of hell also.

An important aspect of the religio-philosophical thought of this period is the development of the doctrine that reward and punishment are not eternal. How could the limited good or evil that men can do in a brief life result in endless pleasure or pain in the next world ? Therefore reward or punishment, which is in exact correspondence to the good or bad deeds performed, must sometime come to an end. It means that there is prospect of rebirth for both the pious and the wicked. Thus field was prepared for the conception of a beginningless and endless circuit of birth and death; the so-called doctrine of *saṁsāra* or transmigration with its corollary that ultimate happiness is much higher than the life in heaven (*svarga*) and consists in freedom from *saṁsāra* which is the true *moksha* (release). This, however, was the main doctrine of the Upanishads and is only vaguely adumbrated in this period. Some scholars such as Oldenberg and Bloomfield see in the eschatological speculations of the Brāhmaṇas the origin of the doctrine of *saṁsāra*. But as pointed out by G. C. Pande the doctrine of *saṁsāra* was closely related with a number of other ideas which came into existence in the Upanishadic period only (see *infra*, p. 46 ff.)

The religious ideas of the common man of the Vedic age are mainly known from the *AV*. It is generally held that the religion of the *AV* is an admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan ideals. According to this view when the Vedic Aryans advanced into India they came across uncivilized tribes worshipping serpents and stones. But instead of destroying these primitive neighbours the Aryans absorbed them. This spirit of accommodation naturally elevated the religion of the primitive tribes but degraded the Vedic religion by introducing into it magic, sorcery and witchcraft. But this view is not wholly correct.[1] Magic and religious cults both having an identical aim in the beginning, namely, the control of the transcendental world, were included in the religion of the Aryans; only the outlook of the upper classes depicted in the *RV*, *YV*, etc. was more priestly-oriented while the common man relied more on magic and witchcraft. The *AV* is more concerned with the latter, though it cannot be denied that the Aryan contact with the pre-Aryan people of India, who had their own worship of spirits and stars, trees and

[1]Cf. Apte, V. M., *The Vedic Age*, p. 444; Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 337 ff.

mountains, and had other superstitions must have strengthened this aspect.

As the *Ṛk*, *Sāma* and *Yajus Saṁhitās* were compiled by the priests for use in the yajñas to be peformed for wealthy yajamānas, their tone, even where the mantras are not directly addressed to the gods, is mainly one of begging and persuading. But the tone of the *AV* is completely different. Here the Brāhmaṇa purohita is addressing his social inferiors. Therefore, in this work his supposed privileges are shamelessly asserted while of his obligations there is hardly any mention.

The Atharvan priest ordinarily moved in the society of the poor and ignorant villagers and satisfied their demands of primitive superstitions. But as even the people of the upper classes were not above those superstitions, the Atharvan priest gained access to them also—even to the rulers of the country—and in fact came to be recognized as the king's alter ego in the role of his purohita. While other priests were experts in the higher Śrauta-ritual which was performed only at intervals, the Atharvan had to advise the king on trivial events of his daily life. He, therefore, had to be in the company of the king constantly. In these circumstances only he could be the king's chief adviser.

As the principal aim of the *AV* is to appease (the demons), to bless (the friends) and to curse (the foes), it did not find much favour with the priesthood who excluded it from the sacred *trayī*—the three-fold lore. This was, however, a later development. In their origin, magic and cult both have identical aim—the control of the transcendental world. They have this essential unity of purpose. There soon comes a time, however, when the priest who pays homage to the gods parts company with the magician who is in league with the demons. It is a remarkable fact, however, that in spite of this aversion to the *AV*, the Veda of magic, the ritual texts which describe the great sacrifices do incorporate exorcism-formulas and magic rites whereby the priest can destroy the enemy whom he hates and who hates him.[1] Later Manu sanctioned the use of exorcism against enemies.[2]

Least savoury of the magic charms of the *AV* are those of witchcraft (*abhichāra*) and the like, which constitute its Āṅgiras part. The

[1]*The Vedic Age*, pp. 442–43.
[2]*Manusmṛti*, XI.33.

purpose of some is defensive, but the majority of them are offensive in purpose and directed against human enemies. Evil spirits are firstly directed to come out in the open and proclaim their real character, for, as soon as they do that, they lose their dangerous power of doing injury. The metal most effective against the demons is lead which, therefore, plays a prominent part in these hymns.

A large number of medicinal charms are included in the *AV*. The chief malady that was sought to be treated magically is *takman* (most likely malarial fever). The plant Kushṭha is mentioned as potent in fighting *takman*, but whether as medicine or as amulet, is not quite clear. At one place *takman* is asked to seize the Śūdrā and the Dāsī or to go away to the Mūjavants or 'to the Vāhlikas further beyond', and in the last verse the author says quite maliciously that he is sending *takman* to the Gandhāris, Angas and Magadhas 'like one sending a treasure to a person'.[1] The *AV* contains charms against snake-bite also. In one of them occurs the word *tabuva* which was connected with 'taboo' by Weber.

The concept of gods in the *AV* is more advanced than that of the *RV*. The conception of Rudra-Śiva for example certainly represents a transitional stage between the conception of Rudra in the *RV* and the systematic philosophy of Śaivism in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*. Rudra has been invoked in a long hymn, and as is usual in prayers to this god, has not been asked to confer boons, but only not to injure.[2] The various names applied to the god in this hymn naturally call to mind the *Śatarudriya*.

Some philosophical ideas of the *AV* are quite original and profound. That *Kāla* or Time is the First Cause of all existence is a truly philosophical notion, but it has been given a mystic turn. Elsewhere Prāṇa (Breath) and Kāma (Love) are described as First Causes. The Rohita hymn contains a sublime glorification of the 'Red One' (the genius of the sun) as a cosmogonic power. Alongside of this are found mystical fancies such as the exaltation of the sun as a primeval principle under the guise of a Brahmachārī, and the glorification of the Ox, the Bull, the Cow, and Vrātya, each being alternately looked upon as the Highest Being.[3] *AV* XI.8 suggests the idea of Brahman as the First Cause of all existence.

[1] *AV*, V 2
[2] *AV*, IX 2.
[3] *The Vedic Age*, p 114

Later Vedic or Upanishadic Religion

Āraṇyakas : Beginiing of Reaction to Excessive Ritualism

The excessive ritualism of the Middle Vedic Age was bound to produce a reaction. The *Āraṇyaka* texts, usually appended to the Brāhmaṇas, are virtually an admission that the correct performance of rituals, which had developed into enormous proportions in the Brāhmaṇas, could not be expected from all. How could ordinary people perform sacrifices which were highly complicated, required a large force of priests, involved huge expenditure and lasted for years together? The epics narrate now the ṛshis like Śaunaka performed sattras which took twelve years to complete. There were again some parts of the sacrificial knowledge which were of mystical nature and which could be taught only in the privacy of the forest. The *Āraṇyaka* texts were composed to deal with these problems. They are, therefore, mainly devoted to an exposition of the mysticism and symbolism of the sacrifice. Meditation, rather than performance, is the spirit of their teaching. They substitute a simpler ceremonial for the complicated sacrifices of the Brāhmaṇa texts. They stress the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice as distinguished from the outer or formal sacrifices, consisting of oblations of meat, rice, barley or milk. They thus mark the transition from the way of action (*karma mārga*), which was the main concern of the Brāhmaṇas, to the 'way of knowledge' (*jñāna mārga*) advocated in the Upanishads. Further, the Āraṇyakas emphasize upon *upāsanā* (meditation) of certain symbols and austerities for the realization of the Absolute, which by now had superseded the 'heaven' of the Brāhmaṇa works as the highest goal of human life.

Upanishads : Further Reaction to Priestly Ritualism

The advance of the Upanishads on the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas consisted in "an increased emphasis on the monistic suggestions of the Vedic hymns, a shifting of the centre from outer to the inner world, a protest against the externalism of the Vedic practices and an indifference to the sacredness of the Vedas".[1] The Upanishads develop the ideas of the Saṁhitās to a higher level. For example heaven looms large in the Saṁhitās and performance of sacrifice is

[1]Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 144.

described as the chief means to attain it. The Upanishads also take into consideration the desire of man for prolonged enjoyment but point out that even the joys of heaven are not eternal. The eternal bliss comes from the realization of Brahman or Ātman which is within the reach of man. Similarly they point out the shortcoming of the cult of sacrifice. Instead of common sacrificial cult in which offerings are made, a number of extraordinary fires are pointed out such as heaven with the sun as its fuel, the solar rays as its smoke, the moon as its cinder, and so on, the aim being to withdraw the mind of the aspirant from external things and direct it inwards. The Upanishads declare that the soul will not attain salvation by the performance of sacrifices. Perfection is inward and spiritual, not outward and mechanical. We cannot make a man clean by washing his shirt. God is to be worshipped by meditation, and not by external ceremony.

However, there is no consistency in the Upanishads regarding their attitude towards the cult of sacrifice. Realizing the inefficacy of *rituals to secure immortality* an extreme section of thinkers abandoned them completely. Others, who were more moderate in their thinking, sought to synthesize it with the newer vogue of Brahmavidyā. It was the beginning of the *Jñānakarmasamuchchaya-vāda*—the doctrine of the synthesis of *jñāna* with *karma*. The majority of the orthodox priests however continued to cling to the old belief with only slight modification. They now conceded the supremacy of the theory of *karma* but included the sacrificial acts among the most righteous acts. No wonder if modern scholars fail to agree in their assessment of the Upanishadic attitude to the cult of sacrifice Some such as N. Dutt believe that 'the performance of sacrifices continued to be the core of the religion',[1] while others including Ranade opine that 'The spirit of Upanishads is, barring a few exceptions here and there, entirely antagonistic to the sacrificial doctrine of the Brāhmanas.'[2]

Theism of the Upanishads

The Upanishadic philosophy is rightly regarded as the source of all Indian philosophy. The *Brahmasūtra* claims to be an aphoristic summary of the Upanishads. The *Gītā* was regarded the milk milked

[1]Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 12.
[2]Ranade, *Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 6

out of the Upanishad-cows and is particularly influenced by the *Kaṭha* and the *Īśa*. The various āchāryas of Vedānta—Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva and Vallabha—regarded the Upanishads as the first Prasthāna and interpreted them in such a way as to make them suit their own respective theories. Jainism derived its idealism from the Upanishads. Buddhism derived its idealism, monism, absolutism and the theory of momentariness of all worldly things, the theory of distinction between the empirical and the absolute standpoints and the theory that Nirvāṇa can be attained by right knowledge alone, from the Upanishads. Sāṁkhya derived from them the doctrine of Prakṛti (from the *Śvetāśvatara*), the theory of the three guṇas (probably from the three colours in the *Chhāndogya*), the doctrine of purusha, the theory of the relation of mind, intellect and soul (from the *Kaṭha*) and the doctrine of *Liṅgaśarīra* (from the *Praśna*). Yoga is mainly based on the *Śvetāśvatara*. Thus the Upanishads contributed something or other to the evolution of almost every philosophical system of India.

In the Upanishads Brahman is described in two ways. It is called cosmic, all-comprehensive, full of all good qualities—*Saprapañcha*, *Saguṇa* and *Saviśesha*. And it is also called acosmic, quality-less, indeterminate, indescribable—*Nishprapañcha*, *Nirguṇa*, *Nirviśesha* and *Anirvachanīya*. This distinction is the basis of the famous distinction made by Śaṅkarāchārya between God and the Absolute. The former is called lower Brahman (*apara Brahman*) or Īśvara, and the latter higher Brahman (*para Brahman*) or the Absolute. God is the personal aspect of the Absolute and the Absolute is the impersonal aspect of God. But Rāmānuja has opposed this distinction. To him the Absolute is the personal and the immanent God, and matter and selves alike form His real body.

In any case, at the religious level the Upanishads usually advocate monotheism, the worship of one god—the *tadvanam* in the *Kena*[1] and the *tajjalān* in the *Chhāndogya*. In some Upanishadic texts the cosmological argument for the existence of God as creator is found; there are also some incipient references to the ontological argument for theism. The monotheistic idea of the Upanishads arose from the very nature of the early Vedic gods. It appears to have developed first into the notion of a primordial person who created the universe. Several sūktas of the *Ṛgveda Saṁhitā* attest to this.

[1]*Kena Upa.*, 31.

Already in the 10th maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda* the idea of one God, creator of the universe, is clearly expressed. According to the Nāsadīya Sūkta the many gods, so many regulative forces of Nature, are posterior to creation, while the one God is its source. He alone knows and supervises it. According to the Purusha Sūkta the whole cosmos is nothing but a part of the body of Purusha. In the Brāhmaṇas the idea of Prajāpati, Hiraṇyagarbha and Viśvakarman finds frequent mention. In the Upanishads the multiplicity of the gods is traced to a single principle, *prāṇa*, which seems to stand for the dynamic power of the cosmos and is inseparable from Ātman or Purusha as the ultimate sentient principle. The *devatās* are nothing but the prāṇic functionaries and limited aspects of the Divine. Later on the *Gītā* declared that "even those devotees who, endowed with faith, worship other gods, they too worship Me alone though not in accordance with *vidhi* (rules)."[1] The *Kenopanishad* explicitly asserts that Brahman is the power behind the gods. Without His aid Agni cannot burn a blade of grass, nor can Vāyu move it. The *Īśāvāsya* declares that the whole world is dwelt by God who is the innermost as well as the outermost of all principles. The *Kaṭha* declares that Ātman can be attained only by His own grace, and again, that the Supreme Person, lying beyond all principles, is still concealed in everything. In the *Muṇḍaka Upa.* also there is reference to supreme personal god.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* contains the famous dialogue between Vidagdha Śākalya and Yājñavalkya where the former asks the latter : "Yājñavalkya, how many are the gods?" The answer given is : "Three hundred and three, three thousand and three". When the question is repeatedly asked the number of the gods is gradually reduced to thirty-three, six, three, two, one and a half and, finally, one.[2] It is then explained by Yājñavalkya that the large figure mentioned first is simply the glorification of thirty-three gods, namely eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas, Indra and Prajāpati. The six gods are Agni, Pṛthivī, Vāyu, Antariksha, Āditya and Dyaus. The three are three worlds. The two are Anna and Prāṇa. The 'one and a half' god is the wind that blows. The one god is Prāṇa. that is Brahman.[3]

[1]*Gītā*, IX.23.
[2]*Bṛ. Upa.*, 3 9.
[3]Pande, in *History of the Punjab*, p. 97.

The highest development of Upanishadic theism is reached in the *Śvetāśvatara*. It declares that the ultimate principle is neither Time, nor Nature, nor Destiny, nor Chance, nor Matter, nor the individual soul and nor their combination. The ultimate principle is God (*Isa*, *Deva*) whose power is inscrutable and who is accessible only through *dhyāna yoga*. He not only creates the Universe but gives deliverance from sin and suffering by bestowing grace (*prasāda*) in response to supreme devotion (*parā bhakti*; VI.23). The Lord is called Rudra-Śiva and Maheśvara here and Vishṇu in the *Kaṭha*.

Here it may be noted that the Upanishadic monotheism tended to undermine the popular foundation of Vedic religion. Now the various *devalokas* were subordinated to the psychic Brahmaloka. It was in line with their general attitude to the cult of sacrifice and the authority of the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa texts as sources of divine knowledge. However, the Upanishadic thinkers, despite their main emphasis on *dhyāna yoga* or meditation tended to strengthen the devotional aspect of theism which is found only in latent form in the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas but became the dominant element in Indian religions in the post-Vedic age. Actually the germs of Bhakti and devotional sects are traceable even in the *RV*.[1] In the Upanishads the idea of Bhakti becomes clearer. Bhandarkar long ago pointed out that the idea of Bhakti may be traced to the Upanishadic concept of *upāsanā* (fervent meditation) itself which cannot but magnify the being meditated upon and gives it a glorious form so as to excite love and admiration. He also pointed out to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* in which the Ātman is described as dearer than a son, wealth and everything. This approach is quite nearer to the idea of Bhaki—only a personal god is substituted by impersonal Ātman. Thus the Upanishads prepared the background for the rise of the later devotional worship also.[2]

The Upanishads also prepared the background for the rise of sectarian cults. For example the existence of the cult with Rudra as some sort of sectarian god is clearly traceable in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*.[3] At one place it describes Rudra as the Great God

[1]Cf Sircar, 'Antiquity of the Bhakti Cult', *The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geography*, p. 36 ff.

[2]Goyal, S. R., *RHAI*, II, p. 88 ff.

[3]*Śvetāśvatara*, VI 7.

(Maheśvara) among gods (Īśvaras) and as supreme deity (*parama devatā*) among gods (*devatānām*) and also as the creator of Brahmā. It is also said that Rudra presented the Vedas to Brahmā.[1] It suggests, if not proves, that in the days of the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* Rudra was regarded as the greatest god by a class of his sectarian devotees.

[1] *Ibid.*, VI.18.

Chapter 2

PRE-BUDDHA ROOTS OF BUDDHISTIC IDEAS

Heterogenous Character of Vedic Society

Harassers of the Sacrificers

Though the Early and Middle Vedic or Brāhmaṇical religion was this-worldly (*pravṛtti mārgī*) in nature in which the worshipper sought to propitiate the gods by performing sacrifices of various types with the help of priests, yet it should not be presumed that the entire Vedic society believed in the cult of sacrifice. Firstly, in the *RV* there are references to peoples and groups who were opposed to the ritualistic religion of the Vedic Aryans. In the *RV* 11.12.5 is mentioned the existence of a section of people who believed neither in the existence of Indra and nor in heaven. In the *RV* VIII. 103.3 Agni is invoked to help the sacrificer with animals and other types of wealth as such things were often stolen away by the non-believers. In the *RV* VIII.104.24 Indra is prayed to help the sacrificer against his harassers who included males and females both. In some verses the oppressors of the ritualists are called Yātudhānas and Yātudhānīs. According to Sāyaṇa the term Yātudhāna means 'he who causes *yātanā* or *pīḍā*'. In several verses various gods are invoked to crush them. In some verses the harassers of the ritualists are called *Rakshasas* and Indra, Agni, Soma, or some other god is invoked to drive them out from the venue of the ritual and for destroying them. The Rakshasas were divided into different tribes or groups[1] and their banners were marked with the representations of dog, owl, eagle, vulture, etc. They surrounded the ritualists, destroyed their rituals and even murdered them. The epic legends of the harassment caused to Viśvāmitra and other ṛshis by the Rākshasas (Rakshasas of the *RV*) and Rāma's or some other king's endeavour to make them free of this menace were based on the actual experience of the Vedic ṛshis.

[1]*RV*, VII.104.22.

It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of the harassers of the ritualists were Aryans themselves. According to *RV* I.33.5 some of them were of reddish complexion (*pishaṅgabhṛshṭi*) though of evil nature. As pointed out by R. K. Bhattacharya they most likely belonged to the Aryan community itself.[1]

Other Elements Hostile to 'Vedic' Religion

Secondly, we should remember that the Vedic literature refers to people who worshipped images (*mūradevāḥ*) or symbols of gods. Such persons could not have been whole-hearted supporters of the hieratic religion. Then, as we have seen, the *AV* has preserved the picture of the superstitions and beliefs of the common man which were accepted as a part of the Vedic tradition only grudgingly and at a later date. It proves that the Ṛgvedic ritualistic religion did not enjoy undisputed monoply even amongst the Aryans.

But the Indian society of the Early and Middle Vedic Periods was even more heterogeneous than is indicated by the facts mentioned above. The Aryans entered India in waves at different times. Therefore, they themselves could not have been a compact group. It is just possible that the different waves of the Aryans belonged to different cultural traditions, as was the case in Greece. There, the early wave of the Indo-Europeans, known as the Achaean, defeated the authors of the Cretan Civilization but readily adopted the material culture of the vanquished. But the later wave of the Indo-Europeans, known as the Dorian, was more destructive and less amenable to cultural adaptation; it, therefore, destroyed the Mycaeanean Civilization created by the Achaeans but did not itself adopt it.[2] A similar situation might have arisen in India; the possibility that the authors of the Lothal and Kalibangan (where figurines of mother-goddess and stone liṅgas are absent but fire altars are found) were a wave of the non-Ṛgvedic Aryans cannot be ruled out.[3] It might have adopted the material culture of the Indus people minus its religion while the Ṛgvedic Aryans refused to adopt the urban ways of life altogether. Here one is instantly reminded of the well-known theory regarding the Inner and Outer Bands of the Indo-

[1]Bhattacharya, R. K., 'Opposition to Rituals in the Ṛgveda', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, p. 11.

[2]Botsford, G. W. and Robinson, C. A., *Hellenic History*, pp. 11, 31.

[3]Cf. Goyal, S. R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, pp. 534-35.

Aryan-people.[1]

Then there were non-Aryans which Aryans came into contact with. They belonged to different cultural traditions and various degrees of cultural development. There were on the one hand authors of the highly developed urban Indus Civilization (or their descendants) and, on the other, a large number of primitive tribes living in forests, mountains and plains. Thus the structure of the Indian society in the Early and Middle Vedic Age was quite complex. This complexity is reflected in the religious ideas of the period. The Vedic literature itself, which is mainly concerned with the hieratic religious tradition (and only partly with the religious beliefs of the masses), proves the growing impact of the non-'Vedic' religious ideas on the society of the Early and Middle Vedic Age. It was as a result of the fusion of all these Vedic and non-Vedic ideas that the Upanishadic and the various post-Vedic religious ideologies evolved, their similarities and dissimilarities being largely the result of the degree of emphasis given on or hostility shown to the various shades of ideas of the Vedic and non-Vedic thought-currents.

Problem of 'Marginal Man' in the Vedic Age

'Frontier' Nature of the Vedic Civilization

The migration of the Aryans into India in the form of tribal waves imparted to their civilization the character of a 'frontier' civilization. In the early period the Aryans were settled in the north-west of India. Their geographical horizon extended from Kubhā in the west to the Gaṅgā in the east. Later on the Kuru-Pañchāla region in western U.P. became the chief centre of the Aryan orthodoxy. Still later the Aryans crossed ths Sadānīrā (Gandak) and advanced from Kosala to Videha. Even in the sixth century B.C. Magadha in Bihar was looked down upon as impure and the Lichchhavis of north Bihar were described as Vrātyas. In the south the Aryans only gradually expanded towards the Vindhyas and beyond. Thus during the whole of the Vedic age the Aryans were constantly on the move. That is why their polity was characterized by *jana* states, that is tribal monarchies, rather than *janapadas* or territorial states which came into being only towards the close of the Vedic age. Thus the Vedic society, like the American society of eighteenth and early nineteenth

[1]Chanda, R. P., *The Indo-Aryan Races*, Ch. II.

centuries, was an expanding pioneering society exhibiting some of the characteristics of a frontier civilization so lucidly described by Laski,[1]—"its sense of insecurity and robust optimism, its premium on 'success' and its reliance on religion as means unto that. Under such circumstances priests and warrior kings were naturally in the fore and led society."[2] But the migrations of the Vedic tribes also produced another type of leaders whom we may call, using the terminology of Robert Park, the marginal men of the Vedic age.[3] It were they who were indeed responsible for the fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. Their type, however, needs some elucidation.

Human Migrations and Role of 'Marginal Man'

As a factor of social change migrations are obviously different from peaceful penetration, wars and revolutions. Their role in ancient human history was far more important than it is today. In ancient times migrations usually started with pushing and pressing of a whole or nearly whole tribe (or a group of tribes) and ended with a fusion of the migrating people with the people of the land to which they migrated. It involved not only a change in the habitat of the migrating tribe and some changes in the customs and mores of the migrating tribe and the native people both, but also the emergence of a changed type of personality which it produced. It led to the breaking down of traditional organisation of the two societies and the emancipation of individual man. Energies that were formerly controlled by custom and tradition were released. The individual was freed from social restraints and constraints to which he had been subject. He experienced a release from conventional modes of thought and usually gave evidence of this release in aggressive self-assertion.[4] Inevitably, however, this release was followed in course of time, by the re-integration of the individual in the new social order. In a certain sense and to a certain degree he became a cosmopolitan person. He learnt to look upon the world in which he was born and bred with something of the detachment of a stranger. Simmel has described the position of such a stranger in the commu-

[1]Laski, H. J., *The American Democracy*, Ch. I-II.

[2]Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 264.

[3]Part, Robert, 'Human Migrations and Marginal Man,' *The American Journal of Sociology*, xxxiii.

[4]Teggart, J. F., *Theory of History*, p. 196.

nity in terms of movement and migration. According to him[1] such a stranger presented in his personality the specifications of a wanderer and settled resident both; he stayed but was not settled. That means he was not bound, as others were, by local conventions. And despite all this he was not ready to break with his past. He was a cultural hybrid—a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break with the past and never quite accepted. He was a 'marginal' man—a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies which had by that time not completely fused together. He was usually, though not necessarily, a man of mixed blood. He lived in two worlds in both of which he was, in smaller or greater degree, a stranger. The conflict of culture as it took place in his mind was the conflict of his divided self—the old self and the new. It is true that such a crisis may occur in the life of every individual and does occur even in modern times in the lives of those who settle down in foreign countries, but in the case of the 'marginal' man produced by ancient migrations such a crisis was relatively permanent and took place in the life of a large number of individuals with the result that marginal man became a personality type which lasted for several generations.

'Marginal Man' of the Vedic Age

The religious ideas of the Middle Vedic Age were not only the natural evolution of the Ṛgvedic, Atharvavedic and non-Aryan thought currents described in the preceding pages but were also the result of the fusion of these various ideologies which found expression in the minds of those who stood on the boundary line of various religious traditions. As we will see below, these people usually belonged to more than one religious *milieu* and more often than not found themselves in a sort of dilemma. There were non-Aryans who were attracted by the Aryan religious ideas but could not cut themselves off from their past. Similarly there were Aryans who were inclined to accept the elements of non-Aryan religions or were impressed by the thinking of non-Vedic Aryan traditions but were proud of their Vedic heritage also. Such people were the product of the migrations of Aryan tribes (and also of the non-Aryan tribes which were forced by the Aryans to move onwards) and were part of and yet strangers to both the cultural worlds—to

[1]Quoted by Robert Park.

which they originally belonged and by which they were influenced. They therefore belonged to the category of 'marginal' man of Robert Park and the 'stranger' of Simmel. It was in their minds that conflicting cultures of the age met and fused. In the lives of many this conflict of old and new cultures found expression in a moral dichotomy and inner turmoil—something which was quite natural when one set of habits and ideas was in the process of being discarded and the other one was not fully adopted.

'Marginal' man of the Vedic Age came from both the sides of the margin—Aryan and non-Aryan. On the non-Aryan side already in the Ṛgvedic Age we find references to Dāsas who had adopted some Aryan practices and gave gifts to Brāhmaṇas. The *RV* VIII.46.32 refers to a Dāsa named Balbūtha as a giver of gifts to Brāhmaṇas. The Munis of the *RV* discussed below were in a way the 'marginal' men of the Ṛgvedic period because though their tradition 'went back to the pre-Vedic pre-Aryan origins' and they were 'alien to Ṛgvedic culture',[1] yet occasionally they are called the friends of Indra and obeisance is made to them. The *ŚB* addresses Tura Kāvasheya as a Muni[2] but *AB* informs that his father Kavasha Ailūsha was driven out from the sacrifice on the Sarasvatī with the words 'O, son of a female slave, you are a rogue and not a Brāhmaṇa.'[3] On this account they even refused to dine with him.[4] The Yatis are at several places described as enemies of Indra and at some places as friends of the Aryan Bhṛgus. Thus they were also a category of 'marginal' men. The very collection and classification of the Vedas has been attributed to Vyāsa in whom the presence of non-Aryan blood is beyond doubt.

From the Aryan side the 'marginal' men came from diverse social groups. Firstly, there were the Vrātyas. They spoke Aryan language but did not believe in ritualistic religion. Then there were princes like Devāpi who are said to have become degraded because they, according to Paurāṇika tradition, gave up their adherence to the Vedic religion.[5] The Aryan thinkers who adopted and popularised the worship of the Yajurvedīya and Atharvavedīya Rudra (who had imbibed a number of non-Aryan elements)[6] obviously belonged to

[1]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 258.
[2]*ŚB*, II, p. 1041.
[3]*AB*, VIII.1.
[4]Cf. Basu, Jogiraj, *India in the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*, p. 30.
[5]Chitrav, *Bhāratavarshīya Prāchīna Charitrakośa*, p. 300.
[6]Goyal, S. R., *A Religious History of Ancient India*, I, p. 78.

both the cultural worlds. Same was the case of those Aryans who adopted yoga and other peculiarities of the Indus religion. They stood on the boundary line of the two worlds. The Kshatriya princes of the Upanishadic Age such as Pravāhaṇa Jaivalī of Pañchāla, Aśvapati of Kekaya, Ajātaśatru of Kāśī and Janaka of Videha and their Brāhmaṇa contemporaries such as Yājñavalkya and the people of dubious descent such as Satyakāma Jābāla, Raikva, etc. also stood on the margin of the two cultural traditions; for on the one hand they preached an other-worldly philosophy which was opposed to this-worldly ritualistic religion of the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas and on the other did not reject the authority of the earlier Brāhmaṇical texts.

'Marginal' Groups of the Vedic Age

The Munis

The most important group of people who stood on the boundary line of the Vedic and non-Vedic religious ideas were the Munis. They were the champions of the other-worldly or Śramaṇic ideology. In the Introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*, Śaṅkarāchārya has observed that the Vedic religion is two-fold—Pravṛtti Dharma and Nivṛtti dharma (*Dvividho hi Vedokto dharmaḥ Pravṛtti lakshaṇo nivṛtti lakshaṇaḥ cha*).[1] Scholars like Jacobi and Oldenberg basically accept this thesis and attribute the rise of the Nivṛtti dharma (gnostic and ascetic tradition) to a reformist school within the Vedic tradition and regard Buddhism and Jainism as continuations of this reformist tendency. Some others such as S. K. Chatterji and R. P. Chanda believe that the two tendencies may be attributed to different ethnic traditions—Aryan and non-Aryan, the ascetic tradition being the contribution of the latter. Some other historians feel that the ascetic movement arose as a result of the break up of tribal economy and other socio-economic changes which were concomitant with the Second Urban Revolution.[2] According to G. C. Pande, however, it would not be correct to think of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti as belonging to two different ethnic and historic strata. Even in the Indus Civilization, he argues, one can discern both these tendencies—Pravṛtti dharma in the worship of Mother-Goddess and fertility cult and

[1]Gītā, Śaṅkara's Comm., Gita Press ed., p. 1.

[2]For references see Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition, its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, pp. 4–5.

Nivṛtti dharma in the worship of Paśupati and Yogic tradition.[1] However he also admits that the Vedic religion was 'in the beginning essentially Pravṛtti dharma but later on partly through inner evolution and more through the influence of the Muni Śramaṇas it developed Nivṛtti dharma as a tendency within its fold'.[2]

The term 'Śramaṇa' became popular only with Buddhism and Jainism though the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* uses it to denote a particular class of sages.[3] In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* it is used with the term *tāpasa*.[4] Gradually it became a general term for the class of monks of the various heterodox sects. The *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Indica* of Megasthenes and the inscriptions of Aśoka indicate that the heterodox sects claimed for the Śramaṇas equality of status with the Brāhmaṇas. An essential feature of Śramaṇism was *tapas*, that is austerities. It was unknown to Ṛgvedic religion though it was gradually imbibed by the later Brāhmaṇism.[5] *Tapas* was different from *Yajña* in that by the latter were attained worldly success, wealth, children and heaven while the former helped in obtaining mystic superhuman faculties. Later, the gods were also supposed to perform *tapas* as they were expected to offer sacrifices.[6]

The earliest literary evidence for munis comes from the *RV*.[7] The word 'muni' occurs once in a hymn to the Maruts (*RV*, VII.56.8). Here it appears to mean a person in ecstasy. At another place (*RV*, VIII.3.5) Indra is said to have been the friend of the munis (*Indromuninām sakhā*). The third and the most important mention of the munis occurs in the famous Keśī Sūkta (*RV*, X.136). It delineates for us the strange figure of the muni who is described as long-haired (*keśī*), clad in dirty, tawny-coloured garments (*piśaṅgā vasate malā*), walking in the air (*vātaraśanāḥ*)[8] or flying (*antarikshena patati*),

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[2] Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 261.

[3] *TĀ*, II.7.

[4] *Bṛ. Upa.*, IV.3.22.

[5] Cf. Jain, Bhagchandra, 'Antiquity of *Śramaṇa* Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. I, p. 3 ff.

[6] Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 9, n. 18.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] The term *Vātaraśanāḥ* cannot indicate nudity (one having wind as his girdle) as is argued by many (cf. Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 57) since the very next words clearly refer to their clothes. Sāyaṇa interprets the term as 'sons of Vātaraśana, a sage'. According to G. C. Pande the words *antarikshena patati* occurring in verse 4 seem to recapture and expand the sense of *Vātaraśanāḥ*.

delirious with the state of being a muni (*unmadita maunayena*) and inspired (*deveshita*). He enjoyed friendship with Vāyu (*Vāyoḥ sakhātho*) and drank poison[1] with Rudra (*keśī vishasya pātreṇa yad Rudreṇāpibat saha*). He followed the moving wind (*vātasyānudhrājiṁ yanti*) and attained the status of god (*yaddevāso avikshata*). Mortal men (*martāso*) could only see his body (*śarīra*) and no more. He treated the path of sylvan beasts, Gandharvas and Apsarās (*apsarasāṁ gandharvāṇāṁ mṛgāṇāṁ charaṇe charan*). Many aspects of the personality of the muni are rather obscure but it is obvious that he is described as keśī (long-haired) and that he used ochre-robes and had distinctive condition of ecstasy (*mauneya*). His association with the Rudra cult is also quite clear. The reference to the drinking of poison by Rudra with muni may be the germ of the later Vishapāna legend of Śiva while his association with sylvan beasts reminds one of the Paśupati aspect of this god. His description as keśī (long-haired) reminds one of the Keśīs and Jaṭilas of the sixth century B.C. both of which belonged to the heterodox tradition.[2] Obviously the author of the Keśī Sūkta regarded the munis as different from the Vedic ṛshis. As G. C. Pande has said, the Vedic Aryans were filled with a certain sense of wonder and awe at the sight of miracle performing munis.[3] The shape of their ideology in this archaic period is a matter of speculation. It is however obvious and certain that they belonged to the ascetic Śramaṇa ideology from which later Jainism, Buddhism, Sāṁkhya and Yoga and also some other minor systems evolved. In the age of the Buddha the leaders of this ideology were often styled as munis, śramaṇas or parivrājakas. They preached *yoga* and *dhyāna* and lived a homeless life. They did not accept the authority of the Vedas and the efficacy of sacrificial ritual, did not believe in the Vedic gods as creator and disregarded the Brāhmaṇical claim of superiority of birth. "There are five signs of the folly of those who have lost their intelligence", Dharmakīrti declared,[4] "belief in the validity of the Vedas (*Veda-prāmāṇyaṁ*), belief in a creator (*kasyachitkartṛivādaḥ*), expecting ethical merit from ablutions (*snāne dharmechchhā*), pride of caste (*jātivādāvalepaḥ*) and engaging in violence to be rid of sin (*pāpa-hānāya santāpāram-*

[1]Griffith interprets *visha* as 'water'. But the word usually means poison and this meaning is consonant with the later *vishapāna* legend of Śiva.

[2]Sāyaṇa takes the term *Keśī* in the sense of 'sun'. Sukumar Datta agrees with him.

[3]Pande, *Origins*, p. 258.

[4]Quoted by Pande in *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 52.

bhaḥ)." How far these ideas had developed by the Middle Vedic Age, it is difficult to say. But a continuous existence of muni tradition may easily be traced in the Vedic literature. For example the *AV* (VII.74.1) refers to a devamuni who acquired mysterious powers by the dint of asceticism. Similarly, the *Aitareya Brāhmana* (VI.33.3) speaks of Aitasha, the Muni, who was regarded as deranged by his own son and whatever he said was branded as *Aitasha pralāpa*.[1] The *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmana* (X.14.47) refers to a place called Munimaraṇa where Indra restored Vaikhānasa to life who had been killed by Asuras. The *Taittirīya Āranyaka* also speaks of Vātaraśana sages who were Śramanas and Ūrdhvamanthīs According to this text the Vātarasana Śramanas led a celibate life, could disappear at will and teach to the Brāhmaṇas the way beyond sin. It also makes obeisance to the munis of Gangā and Yamunā.[2]

The Yatis

Like the munis, the yatis also belonged to the non-Aryan ascetic tradition which was gradually incorporated within the Vedic fold. In some passages of the *RV* they are described as associates of the Bhṛgus and hence in good relations with Indra.[3] The *Sāmaveda* also mentions them as champions of the Bhṛgus. But in other passages they are described as hostile to Indra who threw them before the Śāla Vṛksha.[4] Like the munis they also had mystical powers. They are said to have overcome the Asuras, their foes. The *Pañchaviṁśa* (X. 14. 4) and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇas* (VII.8) refer to the killing of yatis by Indra. Sāyaṇa explains yatis as *Āsurāyah Prajāḥ* and parivrājakas both. According to P. V. Kane the people of Aryan descent who led a life of meditation and mortification were called munis while persons corresponding to them among the non-Aryans were called yatis. According to D. R Bhandarkar however the yatis belonged to the community of the Asuras themselves.[5] According to P. V. Kane if there is any connection between *yati* and *yātu* (sorcery) then the yatis were probably non-Vedic sorcerers.[6]

[1]Compare it with *unmadita mauneyena* of the Kesi Sūkta.
[2]Cf. Pande, *Origins*, pp. 258-9
[3]*RV*, VIII 3 9,6 8
[4]*Aitareya Brāhmana*, VII 28.1.
[5]See Chakraborty, *op. cit*, p. 11.
[6]Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, II, p. 419.

The Jainas

While the existence of the munis and yatis in the age of the *Ṛgveda* (who believed in ascetic way of life, practised yoga and whose general view of life was other-worldly) is beyond doubt, it is rather problematical whether Jainism as a distinct religion existed in that hoary past. According to the Jainas twenty-three Tīrthaṅkaras had flourished before Mahāvīra (6th century B.C.), the 24th Tīrthaṅkara. The historicity of Pārśvanātha, the twenty-third Tīrthaṅkara is also generally accepted and he is placed about 250 years before Mahāvīra. The historicity of other Tīrthaṅkaras is however as yet a matter only of the Jaina faith. But H. L. Jain[1] has sought to prove the historicity of Ṛshabhadeva, the first of the Tīrthaṅkaras, by correlating the description found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* with the evidence of the Keśī Sūkta of the *RV*. The *Bhāgavata*[2] speaks of the royal sage Ṛshabha who became an *avadhūta* and in this context mentions the Vātaraśana Śramaṇas and uses the epithets *Keśabhūri bhāraḥ* and *Maunavrataḥ* for Ṛshabha. It reminds one of the Keśī Sūkta of the *RV* which refers to munis as *keśīs* and *vātaraśanāḥ*. According to H. L. Jain the *RV* here refers to Ṛshabha, the first of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras. His contention may or may not be correct, but it does open interesting possibilities.

The Vrātyas

Another group of people belonging to the non-Aryan culture complex was that of the Vrātyas. In the *Manusmṛti* (X.20) Vrātyas are defined as the offsprings of the dvijātis or twice-born who have fallen from Sāvitrī. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (I.9.16) however says that those who are born of the mixture of varṇas are called Vrātyas. In the *Mahābhārata* the Vrātya is defined as the progeny of a Śūdra man and Kshatriyā woman.[3] But despite these differences all these texts agree on one point and that is that the Vrātyas were *Sāvitrī-patita*. That is why many scholars including P. V. Kane derive the term 'Vrātya' from *vrata*, vow.[4] However others, including H. Shastri[5], have opined that this derivation is not possible and if it

[1]Quoted by Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 3.

[2]*Bhāgvata P.*, V.5.29, 31 (Gita Press ed.).

[3]Karṇa parvan, 37.44–6; Droṇa parvan, 143.17.

[4]*History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, p. 386.

[5]Shastri, H., *Absorption of the Vrātyas*, p. 3 (Quoted by S. Singh in *Evolution of the Smṛti Law*, p. 134).

is so derived it will not have the sense of a person who neglected his sacred vows (*vratas*). Now-a-days scholars generally believe that the term 'Vrātya' should be derived from 'Vrāta', meaning 'tribe' or 'group' (*Vrāte samavetāḥ Vrātyāḥ*).[1]

According to some historians the Vrātyas were a non-Aryan tribe,[2] while others have advocated their Aryan descent.[3] To us the view that they were Aryans of non-Vedic culture complex seems to be correct. From the *Pañchavimśa Brāhmaṇa*[4] it appears that they spoke Aryan language (*dikshita vācham*) and that their patriarchs were known as *gṛhapatis*. But their ways of life differed from those of the Aryans. They were definitely not included within the pale of the Vedic orthodoxy. They did not approve of the Brāhmaṇcial sacrifices[5] and partook a kind of *surā* presumably as a part of their religious practices.[6] From the *Pañchavimśa Brāhmana* it appears that even in dress etc. they differed considerably from the Aryans. Significantly, according to this text, they were divided into two classes—the *arhats* and *yaudhas* which remind one of the division of the Vedic community into *brahma* and *kshatra*. The use of the term '*arhat*' by the Vrātyas (later adopted by the Jainas) suggests that they were non-Vedic. The *arhats* and *yaudhas* were probably the Vrātya counterparts of Vedic *brahma* and *kshatra*.[7] In the *AV* Māgadha is connected with the Vrātya as a friend.[8] In the *Lāṭyāyana* (VIII.6.28) and *Kātyāyana* (XXII.4 24) *Śrauta Sūtras* also the property of Vrātya (*Vrātyadhana*) is directed to be given to a low Brāhmaṇa or to a Māgadha Brāhmaṇa. These references indicate, if not prove, that the Vrātyas lived in the eastern part of the country which later on became the cradle of Buddhism

The Vrātyas seem to have described their supreme being as Ekavrātya. In the Vrātya Kāṇḍa of the *AV* the Ekavrātya is described as practising austerities (*tapaḥ*), as standing erect for a whole year (XV.3 1) and as having seven *prāṇas* (breaths), seven *apānas* (ex-

[1]Singh, *ibid.*, p. 136.

[2]For example Bhandarkar, Dutta, Ghosh, Bhagawat, etc believe in this theory. For references see S. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[3]E g. H. Shastri, Chattopadhyaya, Keny and Keith. For references see S. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[4]XVII.1.9-15.

[5]*AV*, XV, 12. 1-4.

[6]Karmarkar, A. P., *The Vrātya System of Religion*, p 23.

[7]Dandekar, R N., *Rudra in the Veda*, Poona, 1953, p 8

[8]See Law, B. C., *Māgadhas in Ancient India*, p 1

pirations) and seven *vyānas* (out-breathings) (XV.15.1–2). It indicates his close association with yoga. He is said to have motivated Prajāpati and to have become beautiful, great, elder, Satya, Brahma and Tapas. He is said to have been followed in his marches by Bṛhat, Ādityas, Yajña, Viśvedevāḥ, Varuṇa, Soma, etc. (XV.1.2ff.). The gods are said to be his servants, Will his messenger and all beings his dependents. As pointed out by Sampurnananda[1] the word Ekavrātya here does not seem to signify a human being. It appears to have a mystic significance like the Purusha of the Purusha Sūkta of the *RV*. His close affinity with Rudra is also clearly indicated. Certain features of his physical appearance such as blue belly and red back (XV.1.7), his identification with Mahādeva (XV.1.4) and association with yoga as well as the fact that among the deities of the Vrātyas were included Ugra, Rudra, Bhava, Śarva, Paśupati and Īśāna suggest that the Vrātyas contributed a lot to the worship of Rudra-Śiva. The *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* divides the Vrātyas into four categories—*hīna*, *gārāgir*, *samanīchameḍhra* and *nindita*. Of these four categories the *gārāgir* (= swallowers of poison) reminds us of the munis of the *RV* who drank poison in the company of Rudra and the term *samanīchameḍhra* (= one whose penis hangs low through control of passion) brings to mind the rigorous penances and yogic practices observed by the munis and brahmachārīs (*infra*).

Thus we may conclude that the Vrātyas were the followers of a distinct religious cult which was Aryan but non-Vedic in origin and which had close affinities with the cult of Rudra-Śiva.

The Brahmachārī Cult

According to R. N. Dandekar[2] another ascetic cult of non-Vedic origin having close affinity with Rudra and phallus worship was that of the brahmachārīs. They are mentioned in the Brahmachārī Sūkta of the *AV* (XI.5). The views that the Sūkta refers to the Vedic student or Brahman or sun have been challenged by Dandekar. According to him the object of the Sūkta is the glorification of a cult which was known as the Brahmachārī cult. Its members followed a life of rigorous discipline, clothed themselves with heat (*gharma*), stood up with fervour (*tapas*) and acquired special virile powers. Many of their features remind one of the Rudra-Śiva cult. For example the Brahmachārī is described as being followed by the

[1]Sampurnananda, *The Atharvaveda Vrātya Kāṇḍa*, p. 11.
[2]Dandekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7.

Gandharvas (XI.5 2) whose association with Rudra-Śiva is well known (cf. the Keśī Sūkta of the *RV*). The most striking evidence in this connection is the description of the Brahmachārī as the possessor of great penis (*bṛhachchhepa*) and the sprinkler of the seed (*retaḥ siñchati*) It makes it quite clear that his cult was a part of the culture complex to which the Rudra and Linga worship belonged.

The Linga Worship

From the above discussion it is quite obvious that in the Middle Vedic Age the Linga worship became comparatively more popular and despite its non-Vedic origin began to claim increasingly greater recognition among the Vedic Aryans themselves. The Ṛgvedic *ṛshis* prayed (*RV*, VII.21.5), 'let not the 'Śiśnadevāḥ enter our sacrificial paṇḍāla'. As we have seen this and other such derogatory references to Śiśnadevāh are most likely to the phallic worshippers of the Indus Civilization. But gradually alongwith the transformation of the personality of Rudra, ideas concerning phallic worship found entry in the Vedic religion. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (II.7) refers to Vātarasana sages who were Śramaṇas and Ūrdhvamanthīs. According to Sāyaṇa the term Ūrdhvamanthī means Ūrdhvaretas i e. 'one whose semen goes up'. It obviously indicates their claim of control over sexual passions and reminds one of the description of the Vrātyas in the *Pañchavimśa Brāhmaṇa* as *śamanīchameḍhra* (one whose penis hangs low through control of passion) and of the Brahmachārīs as *bṛhachchhepa* ('possessor of great penis').

The increasing popularity of Linga worship is indicated by some other passsages of the *AV*. At one place (X.8) it describes the Skambha as co-extensive with the universe and comprehends in him the various parts of the material universe and also the abstract qualities. In this connection it is said that He who knows' the golden reed (*vetas*) is the mysterious Prajāpati'. Significantly the word *vetas* used here in the sense of reed has been used in the sense of membrum virile in the *RV* (X.95.4–5) and the *ŚB*. According to Rao[1] "It is the same Skambha that has given birth to the story of Śiva's appearance as a blazing pillar between Brahmā and Vishṇu when they were quarrelling about the superiority of one over the other." There are also many phallic ideas and rites depicted in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*, *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* and the *Śatapatha*

[1]*Elements of Hindu Iconography*, II, i, p. 571.

Brāhmaṇa. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (4.11.5–2) Rudra is described as the Lord of Yonīs thus indicating his close association with the worship of Yonī, and indirectly with the worship of Liṅga.

Emergence of New Synthesis

Need of a New Synthesis

The impact of the non-Vedic ideologies created a number of social and moral problems for the Vedic society and even threatened the very basis on which it rested. The non-Vedic ideologies on the one hand put the ideal of promiscuity (*kāmāchāra*) before the Aryans and, on the other, induced them towards other-wordly or Śramaṇic outlook—*munivṛtti*—which became the fountain-head of Buddhism and such other ideologies. It may appear as strange but it is a fact that the thinkers responsible for both these rather contradictory appearing outlooks were associated with the Rudra-Śiva cult. But the curious contrast in the two outlooks is more apparent than real, for even in the historical period Tāntrika religion, both Hindu and Buddhist, is found associated simultaneously with *nivṛtti dharma* as well as the grossest and crudest forms of sexual rites. The erotic images found on the Śaiva temples of Khajuraho and other places are the best evidence of this combination in Śaivism. The Purāṇas are full of stories which narrate how Śiva used to go for begging alms in naked fashion making wives of ṛshis fall in love with him.[1] That there was an atmosphere of sexual laxity among many tribes of the Vedic age is a well-documented fact. Though the identification of these tribes is not always possible yet it can be readily imagined that they were associated with the Rudra and Liṅga cults discussed above. Their impact created a turmoil in the Vedic society. The Yama-Yamī dialogue of the tenth maṇḍala of the *RV* composed in the Middle Vedic Age records the mental agony of Yama whose sister Yamī wanted to have incestuous relations with him on the plea that they were sanctified by time and tradition while Yama felt that such relationship violated the laws of Varuṇa. Here our suggestion that in the Indus Valley Civilization brother-sister marriages were prevalent may be recalled.[2] It is just possible that Yamī's plea emanated from the fact that in some tribes (of Indus

[1]Cf. *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 461.
[2]*RHAI*, I, pp. 24–9.

origin) such a tradition went back to great antiquity while Yama's arguments were based on the moral ideas of the Vedic society. Thus this instance is a fine example of a young man and woman living on the boundary line of two moralities. The *Mahābhārata* records several stories belonging to the characters of the Vedic age which relate how the Vedic Aryans had to safeguard their society from the impact of those who believed in promiscuous relations. According to one story Dīrghatamā, a ṛshi, began to follow the life of complete sexual freedom—the custom of cattle or *go-dharma*—and other ṛshis had to expel him from the hermitage for this sin.[1] In the same epic at one place Pāṇḍu refers to the age when women were not bound with one husband; they had sexual relations with anybody they liked.[2] The institution of marriage was then introduced by Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka. As this type of promiscuous nature of sexual relations cannot be deduced from the moral ideas of the Vedic Aryans and as there are indications that many non-Aryan tribes followed such customs, it may be reasonably argued that promiscuity was *not* a feature of the Vedic society; *rather it* was a danger to which the Vedic society was exposed.

Among the Aryans the importance of the life of householder (*gṛhastha*) was supreme. Their religion was this-worldly and its fulfilment depended upon the procreation of male progeny. Therefore when some Aryans were attracted by the *nivṛtti* ideal of munis, it became a problem whether or not to denounce the philosophy of renunciation. That is why on the one hand our ancient literature is full of praise for munis, yatis and sannyāsīs and, on the other, numerous passages denounce them roundly. This dichotomous attitude is found in the *RV* itself which on the one hand looks upon the munis as alien to the Vedic orthodoxy and on the other as a friend of Indra. Similarly in yatis it sees a friend of the Bhṛgus but at the same time an enemy of Indra. But by and large till the end of the Middle Vedic Age the stronger tendency was to denounce all such groups. The *Mahābhārata* condemns the sannyāsīs as great sinners (*pāpishṭha*).[3] According to a story[4] the great penitent Jaratkāru, who was greedy for strength by penance, was persuaded by his forefathers to marry because without it he could not procreate a

[1]Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, p. 124.
[2]*Mbh.*, 1.22.3-21.
[3]*Mbh.*, 12.8.7.
[4]Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

son needed for the performance of sacrifices for the liberation of manes. Similarly it is said that though Kuṇigarga's daughter performed penances throughout her life yet she could go to heaven only after giving up her maidenhood by marrying Śriṅgavāna.[1] In one passage Indra, the great god of this-worldly religious ideology, explains the futility of sannyāsa to certain sons of Brāhmaṇas who were intending to adopt the life of recluse.[2] When Yudhishṭhira expressed the desire to lead the life of a sannyāsī, his brothers and Draupadī successfuly persuaded him to give up the idea by emphasising the futility of renunciation and necessity of leading the life of a householder. All these instances indicate the dilemma of those Aryans who were feeling attracted towards the life of renunciation but were at the same time finding it difficult to discard their heritage of looking at this world as something desirable.

Upanishads as Link between Vedism and Śramaṇism

Some attempts at the synthesis between the *pravṛtti* ideal of the Vedic and the *nivṛtti* ideal of the Śramaṇic thought-currents was made by the thinkers of the Upanishadic age. The Upanishads on the one hand present a natural development of the Vedic thought and on the other 'a half turn' towards Śramaṇic asceticism.[3] The Upanishadic doctrines in the main represent a continuation and development of Middle Vedic religion but when we suddenly come across at places with belief in transmigration and emphasis on the fundamental values of asceticism, it becomes obvious that here we have to do with Śramaṇa influence.[4] For example the second *adhyāya* of the *Chhāndogya* mentions that there are three sections of dharma—sacrifice, sacred study and liberality and identifies them respectively with tapas, brahmacharya and total gifting to the preceptor. Of these the first two remind one of Śramaṇism. In the fourth *adhyāya* it is said that one who knows Brahman does not really care for wordly things and that human life is full of desires, transgressions and diseases, and so death is no worse. Further it mentions a Devapatha or Brahmapatha. Those who follow it do not return to the human

[1]Vedalankar, H., *Hindu Parivāra Mīmāṁsā*, p. 16.

[2]*Mbh.*, 12.11.27.

[3]Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition, its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, p. 4.

[4]For the antiquity of Śramaṇism see *RHAI*, I, p. 95 ff. Also see Jain, Bhagchandra, 'The Antiquity of Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. 1, pp. 3–6.

whirlpool. According to G. C. Pande it is obviously a reference to the doctrine of Rebirth[1] which is here related with sin and ignorance. In the seventh *adhyāya* of this text Nārada declares that he is suffering misery from which he seeks deliverance through self-knowledge. Here *brahma jijñāsā* is connected with sorrowfulness of life. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* when Yājñavalkya is about to leave home life, he is made to declare that the quest for immortality (*amṛtatva*) is different from the quest for wealth (*vitta*). Spiritual life leads to an end where all dualistic consciousness is lost. The psyche dies with body; only the 'great being' (*mahābhūtam*) remains. This remarkably anticipates the dotrine of Nirvāṇa as understood by the Vijñānavādin Buddhists.[2]

The most significant Śramaṇic doctrine was the doctrine of Rebirth or Transmigration (*Saṁsāra*) in accordance with the law of Karman. One of the greatest problems of the history of Indian thought is the origin of this doctrine and the reason for its rapid spread and almost universal acceptance. S. K. Chatterji traces the idea of transmigration back to "Austric Proto-Austroloids."[3] But V. M. Apte questions the theory that the Aryans derived transmigration from "the animistic views of the aborgines."[4] The doctrine of Karman implies that whatever action is done by the individual leaves behind it some sort of potency which has the power to ordain for him joy or sorrow in future according as it is good or bad. When combined with the doctrine of Rebirth, it implies that when the fruits of actions are such that they cannot be enjoyed in this life, one has to take another birth in order to enjoy them. The act passes away as soon as it is done, but its moral effect is treasured in potency which fructifies in future.[5] Some scholars have seen the origin of the doctrine of Rebirth in accordance with Karman in the eschatological speculations of the Brāhmaṇas. This has rightly been questioned. There are absolutely no traces of the doctrine of transmigration in the *RV*. In the *RV* focus of attention was on earthly life, the world

[1]Pande, G. C., *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 10.
[3]*The Vedic Age*, p. 151.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 496.
[5]For a detailed history of the doctrine of Karma in the Vedic age, vide S. P. Duby, 'The Concept of Karma in the Vedic Literature', *Bhāratī*, 1963-64, p. 105 ff. For a psychological justification of the doctrine of Rebirth see Banerjee, H. N., 'The Concept of Rebirth in Indian Tradition', *Indian Journal of Parapsychology*, VI, No. 3, pp. 49-71.

of the dead beings regarded as merely shadowy. *RV* X.163 suggests that after death a man might pass to water or plants and that *manas* becomes one with cosmos rather than that it is reborn. While operation of a moral law or *ṛta* in the universe was recognized, it was regarded as dependent on the will of gods who enforce it and the will of men who recognize it and seek to follow it. As regards the *Brāhmaṇas* it is true, as Keith has pointed out, that in these texts the notion of *punarmṛtyu* or death in the afterworld is found.[1] But here punarmṛtyu seems to refer to a second birth in heaven. In *AB* (vii.13.6) a man survives in the person of his son. As has been shown by M. Chakravarti, the usual attitude of the *Brāhmaṇas* towards afterlife does not assume a belief in the doctrine of *Saṁsāra*, the recurring cycle of death and birth. In the *Brāhmaṇas* the sacrificer is reborn after death into the midst of gods and enjoys an immortal existence imagined after the manner of the worldly life.[2] On the other hand, as argued by G. C. Pande, the doctrine of transmigration presupposes a belief in an immortal conscious principle (*ātman*), recognition of the law of Karman and a deep-seated urge for Mukti. The doctrines of Karman and Rebirth have been called primitive ideas or original Vedic ideas or ideas which developed gradually within the Vedic schools of thought. According to Pande, however, these ideas appear to have intruded into the Vedic thought from the pre-existing stream of non-Vedic ideology which was represented by the Munis and Śramaṇas. By the Later Vedic Age the Vedic thinkers had become prepared to receive these ideas, and so we find some sudden references to them in the Upanishads. However from these references it is also clear that these ideas were new for them.[3] For example in the *Bṛ Upa.*, in the symposium at the court of Janaka, Ārtabhāga asks Yājñavalkya—what happens to man after death? To answer this Yājñavalkya took Ārtabhāga aside and taught him the doctrine of Karman. It suggests that at that time the doctrine of Rebirth in accordance with Karman was regarded as a strange, even secret, doctrine in the Brāhmaṇical circles. As pointed out by Basham in the Pāli texts, on the other hand, transmigration is taken for granted. "With the exception of the school of materialists, who completely denied any form of survival after death, there is no

[1]Keith, A. B., *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 5.

[2]Chakravarti, Moni, 'Metampsychosis in the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas of the *Ṛgveda*', *ABORI*, XLII, 1961, pp. 155–62.

[3]Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 216 f.; *Śramaṇa Tradition*, pp. 12–13.

difference of opinion whatever in the fact of transmigration, or in the desirability of achieving the salvation which frees a man from the cycle of birth and death. The only differences between one sect and another in this respect concern the mechanics of the process of rebirth and the nature of the state of final equilibrium which is attained when the individual escapes from the toils of *saṁsāra*. Nowhere, to the best of our knowledge, do we find in the Buddhist texts a teacher trying to convince his hearers of the actual fact of transmigration. This must surely imply that, by the time of the Buddha, the doctrine was almost universally accepted by ordinary people throughout the civilized part of India. Just how this great change came about, and why it did so, is completely unknown. The suggestion that it is derived from indigenous non-Aryan beliefs is little more than a guess, and the evidence of the texts themselves rather suggests that it began in small circles of high class people, whether Kṣatriyas or Brāhmans."[1]

However, the acceptance of the doctrines of Saṁsāra and Karman caused a veritable spiritual revolution in the Vedic society. The early Vedic religion was life-affirming; the post-Vedic attitude is much more of life-negation or *nivṛtti*. This change came about mainly through the change in the conception of life which the doctrines of Saṁsāra and Karman implied. If the moral quality of an action is the sole and irrevocable determinant of future, man becomes the arbiter of his destiny and priests and sacrifices cease to be indispensable. Bound by this law even gods become no more than the souls born in a certain station. Explaining the philiosophy of Karman Yājñavalkya states: "According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become, the doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. Desire is the source of Saṁsāra. In its absence even Karman does not bind." This is a typically Buddhist doctrine, also supported by the doctrine of nishkāma action of the *Gītā*.

That Yājñavalkya was fully aware of Munis, Śramaṇas and their ideology also becomes obvious from his dialogue with Janaka. In it the former, while explaining what may lead to Vimoksha, speaks of a state of deep sleep where a Chāṇḍāla is not a Chāṇḍāla, a Paulkasa is not a Paulkasa, a Śramaṇa is not a Śramaṇa and a Tāpasa is not a Tāpasa. Elsewhere he says that the Brāhmaṇas,

[1]Basham, A. L., in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, Delhi, 1980, p. 14.

the Munis and Parivrājakas all seek emancipation of soul from the round of birth and death through non-desiring (*atha akāmayamānaḥ*). The Brāhmaṇas seek it through reciting the Vedas, sacrifice and liberality and the Muni Parivrājakas through austeries and fasting. These references to Munis and Śramaṇas and the doctrines of Rebirth and Karman show that Yājñavalkya was conversant with the Śramaṇa doctrines and was influenced by them though his theistic affiliations clearly distinguish his philosophy from Śramaṇism.[1]

The acquaintance with the doctrine of Saṁsāra becomes clearer in the metrical Upanishads. The second *adhyāya* of the *Kaṭha* mentions Munis directly and describes the process of human bondage and liberation. "When all desires of heart are removed then the mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman here." According to Professor G. C. Pande it suggests the possibility of jīvanamukti or Arhathood.

The greatest influence of Śramaṇism is found in the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, the very name of which suggests the influence of the Śramaṇas. It condemns sacrifices as 'frail boats' and declares that those who follow the ritualistic path and engage in charitable works cannot become free from the cycle of death and birth. This Upanishad also refers to bhikshācharyā and also to Yatis who abandoned inner evils and practised truth, tapas, brahmacharya and right knowledge (*samyak jñāna*). The *Īśopanishad* discusses the contradiction between the traditional Vedic philosophy of action, ritualistic and moral, and the Śramaṇic philosophy of renunciation. Like the *Gītā*, it reaches the conclusion that if action is done with the spirit of dedication and a sense of the presence of God, it does not bind the doer—*na karma lipyate nare.* Indeed action must not be abandoned; one should always remain engaged in action.

However, it should be kept in mind that though the Upanishads are generally aware of the doctrines of rebirth in accordance with one's actions, and renunciation, it cannot be maintained that these texts as a whole advocate other-wordly ideology. According to Prof. Pande, "The prevailing doctrine in the Upaniṣads is a manifestation of divine being and energy. The many gods of the earlier period were no doubt merged into one Great Being identified with the Self but the result was a spiritual view of the universe where . . . every finite object is nothing but a limited expression of Brahman.

[1]Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 21.

Creation and manifestation are held to be real, not illusory. It is true that occasional utterances denying duality or asserting unreality of Name and Form can be quoted on the other side. But... the realistic interpretation appears to be the correct one."[1] Thus it would seem that though the Upanishads give evidence of gradually increasing impact of Śramaṇic ideology, yet their main emphasis was still on positive, active and robust outlook on life seeking a higher reality behind what we see.[1]

Āśrama Organisation as a Device of New Synthesis

Thus the impact of the ascetic tendencies on the Vedic society in the Upanishadic age does not necessarily mean that the sannyāsa āśrama had become institutionalized in that early period. The scheme of the four stages or Āśramas of an individual's life is regarded as an important feature of ancient Hinduism. Literally the word āśrama means 'a hermitage' or 'resting place', but technically it means a stage in the life of a Hindu. The scheme of four *āśramas was essentially socio-religious in nature. It recognised four* stages, namely, *brahmacharya* (the stage of a student of the Vedas), *gṛhastha* (the stage of a householder), *vānaprastha* (the stage of a hermit) and *sannyāsa* (the stage of an abandoner of all worldly concerns).[2] Some early scholars including Max Müller, Bühler and Jacobi believed that asceticism arose in the Vedic society itself. Jacobi has suggested that the Brāhmaṇa ascetic supplied the common prototype which was copied by the Buddhists as well as the Jainas. In support of this view it is argued that both the Jaina and the Buddhist rules of discipline for the mendicant resemble those found in the law-books of Gautama and Baudhāyana. But the weakness of this theory has been shown by S. K. Dutt and G. C. Pande.[3] As argued by Pande the aforesaid resemblances consist in the main of rules of a very general character. The first four great vows of the Sannyāsin, for instance, may be said to belong to the universal repertoire of asceticism. In order words, if there was borrowing, it was not so much of particular regulations as of the ideal of the ascetic. Secondly, the word 'āśrama' does not occur in the Saṁhitās or the Brāhmaṇas. According to Kane also there is nothing in the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[2] Cf. Joshi, L. M., in *History of Punjab*, p. 158.

[3] Dutt, S. K., *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 39 ff.; Pande, *Origins*, pp. 322-24; cf. also Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 158-165.

Vedic literature expressly corresponding to the Vānaprastha.[1] The term āśrama itself is not very old. Its earliest use is found in the expression *'atyāśramibhyaḥ'* which occurs in the *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* (VI.21). But according to Pande this expression seems to imply that mendicancy was as yet beyond the ken of the āśramas[2] According to Kane perhaps the earliest reference to the four āśramas occurs in a passage of the *Ait. Br.* (33.1) which states "What use is there of dirt, what use of antelope skin, what use of tapas? O Brāhmaṇa, desire a son; he is a world to be highly praised." But to find here a reference to the four āśramas appears quite speculative. Kane admits that even in the much clearer reference of the *Chhāndogya* (II.23.1) there was as yet no clear distinction between the third and the fourth āśramas. Some Upanishadic references discussed above undoubtedly show acquaintance with mendicancy, though it is doubtful if they imply a scheme of the four āśramas. As regards the Dharmasūtras, they are of uncertain date and even the supposedly oldest of them, Gautama and Baudhāyana, appear to be, in their present shape, works of a composite nature. According to Hopkins, the Sūtras cannot be earlier than the seventh and later than the second century B.C. It does not therefore appear to be sefe to assume that the theories accepted in these works were well-established dogmas in the Brāhmaṇa circles prior to the 6th century B.C. when the Jainas were already an old and respected sect. It should also be remembered that the Brāhmaṇa society itself was opposed to the fourth āśrama. The whole sacrificial tradition with its material values was anti-asceticism. The passage of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* quoted above is a good description of the values cherished by the Vedic society. It is true that in some early Upanishads a 'half turn' is found towards the ascetic ideal, but even in them the main emphasis is on positive, active and robust outlook on life.[3] And "it may not be without significance that the Upaniṣad most vociferous in the denunciation of sacrifice and the advocacy of the 'Fourth Āśrama' is entitled the 'Upaniṣad of the Muṇḍakas.'"[4] The fact that the theory of the four āśramas was not as yet a finally settled theory in the age of the Dharmasūtras is obvious from the irregularity of the nomenclature adopted by them in this respect. Āpastamba speaks of

[1]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, Pt. I, p. 418.
[2]Pande, *Origins*, p. 322.
[3]Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 22.
[4]Pande, *Origins*, p. 325.

gṛhastha, āchāryakula, mauna and vānaprastha. Gautama has brahmachārī, gṛhastha, bhikshu and vaikhānasa, while Vasishṭha and Baudhāyana speak of brahmachārī, gṛhastha, vānaprastha and parivrājaka.[1] According to Pande, originally the āśramas recognised in the Vedic tradition were the first two. Later on, possibly with the dawn of the age of the upāsanās, the practice of repairing to the forests came into vogue which in course of time grew into a veritable institution.[2] All the while, outside the strictly Vedic pale, were wandering groups of ascetics, sometimes styled the Munis. When towards the close of the Upanishadic Age Brāhmaṇic values underwent a change and some sections within the Vedic society tended to accept the pessimistic world-view which the doctrine of saṁsāra entails, the institution of the fourth āśrama, namely sannyāsa, was postulated. In other words, the ideal of the ascetic appears to have come down to the Jainas and the Buddhists, not from the Brāhmaṇas, but from the previously existing muni-śramaṇa sects. Further, it should also be conceded that the acceptance of the ascetic ideal in the Vedic society in the form of sannyāsa āśrama took place in the post-Upanishadic period though ascetic tendencies were recognised even in the Upanishads themselves.

Purushārtha and Varṇa System as Devices of New Synthesis

The mutual contact of the various Aryan (belonging to both 'Vedic' and 'non-Vedic' categories) and non-Aryan (belonging to both 'Indus' and 'non-Indus' traditions) cultural currents produced not only their mixture but also a compound—not only a combination of the various ideologies but something entirely new. It led not only to the emergence of the Āśrama theory as the ideal pattern for the life of the individual but also to the rise of the ideal of the Purushārtha as the goal of human life and of the varṇa system as the ideal pattern for social organisation. All these three institutions aimed at arriving a synthesis between the conflicting claims of the divergent *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* ideologies. Much of this synthesis, specially the emergence of the Āśrama and the Purushārtha doctrines, took place in the Later Vedic or the Upanishadic Age, or even later. But the varṇa system, which later on became transformed into the caste

[1]For the evolution of the āśrama theory in the Dharmaśāstras, see Haripada Chakraborty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 50-82.

[2]Pande, *Origins*, p. 326; cf. also Joshi, L. M., *Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism and Hinduism*, 1970, p 45 ff.

system, began to be solidified in the Middle Vedic Age itself.

The chief obstacles in the cultural assimilation of the Aryan and non-Aryan races were not only the differences in their linguistic, mental and cultural make-up, but also their divergent physical traits. In modern times the Japanese find it more difficult to mix up with the Americans than the Europeans do because of their racial complexion; the Japanese wear, as it were, 'a racial uniform' which classifies them instantly. The menace of the black-skinned non-Aryans was the Vedic Indian counterpart of the Yellow Peril which the modern Americans have been so conscious of. Under these circumstances though the Aryans and the non-Aryans lived together, each playing a role in politico-economic life, yet for a long time they did not interbreed to a perceptible extent. In other countries the relations of the conquered with the conquering people usually took the form of slavery. In India when the process of adjustment began it assumed the form of varṇa system (which gradually transformed itself into the caste system) which made both of them integral parts of one society. The varṇa system was thus a form of accommodation in which the problems created by the inflow of tribal waves (and many other problems) found solution.

But the emergence of the varṇa system did not solve the problem of the 'marginal man' completely, because from the very beginning the varṇa system was based, at least in practice, on birth and not on a person's qualifications and inclinations (as probably was the theoretical assumption), and therefore it only produced an additional category of persons who found that crossing the barriers of one's own hereditary group was not easy. The prevalent view that in the Vedic age the varṇa of an individual was decided by his vocation and not birth is not correct. Viśvāmitra, a Kshatriya, wanted to attain the status of a Brāhmaṇa but despite his great spiritual attainments, admired even by his opponents, he could not fulfil his ambition. Mahidāsa Aitareya, the author of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, was the son of Itarā, a Śūdrā. His father, who had other sons born of wives of higher castes, treated him shabbily and did not give him his name. In the Upanishadic age Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa, a Śūdra, succeeded in persuading Raikva by the allurement of sumptuous gifts to impart real knowledge to him, but himself could not rise above the status of Śūdra. Similarly in the *Mahābhārata* Karṇa, known as the son of a charioteer (*sūta*), was not accepted as a Kshatriya even when he was raised to the status of the king of Aṅga by Duryodhana;

Draupadī flatly refused to let him participate in her *svayaṁvara* on the plea of his low caste. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Śambūka, a Śūdra, is cold-bloodedly killed by the hero of the epic himself for his ambition to become a *tapasvī*. The agony of people like Kavasha Ailūsha, Mahidāsa Aitareya, Viśvāmitra, Karṇa, Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa and Śambūka is not difficult to be imagined. Here it is interesting to recall that in the same society Brāhmaṇas such as Paraśurāma and Droṇa, who spent their lives pursuing the activities of a Kshatriya warrior, were accepted unhesitatingly by everybody as Brāhmaṇas. It will not, however, be correct to assume that only Brāhmaṇas had such a dichotomous attitude towards varṇa system. The Kshatriyas also suffered from a sense of superiority complex. That is why the Buddha and Mahāvīra on the one hand denounced the four-fold varṇa system and the Brāhmaṇic claim of superiority over others and, on the other, were never tired of claiming the highest status for the Kshatriyas. This psychology, if properly understood and interpreted, may explain a number of problems of the social aspects of ancient Indian religious history, including the problem of the social outlook of Buddhism.

Chapter 3

SOCIETY AND THOUGHT-FERMENT WHICH PRODUCED THE BUDDHA

Changes in Material Culture in the Age of the Buddha

Factors of Change in Material Culture

The period of the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. is regarded as "an age of far reaching religious reforming activity over the whole of the ancient world."[1] In China, Greece and Iran as well as India there is found a remarkable intellectual and religious upheaval in this age. Fortunately, for India we have several independent testimonia—Buddhist, Jaina, Brāhmaṇical—which were clearly and critically set forth by Otto Schrader in 1902[2] and then in a more elaborate form by B. M. Barua in his classic work *Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*. The factors which led to this 'thought-ferment', as S. K. Belvalkar has named it,[3] are not easy to identify. The materialist historiographers such as Gordon Childe attribute it to a change in social being, while idealist historiographers like Bury find in it the progress of thought through its autonomous dialectics.[4]

As far as India is concerned it cannot be denied that important changes did take place in society in the age of the Buddha and the centuries preceding and succeeding it. In the Brāhmaṇa texts we meet a society which is still to a considerable extent tribal in character, ruled by kings who, though wealthy and powerful, have only a rudimentary governmental machinery in the form of *ratnins*. As shown by Basham[5] the popular notion that the *ratnins* of the

[1]*Cambridge Ancient History*, III, p. 499.

[2]Quoted by S. K. Belvalkar in *Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 84.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 85.

[4]Cf. Pande, *Origins*, p. 310 f.

[5]Basham, A. L., 'The Background to the Rise of Buddhism', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, New Delhi, 1980, p. 14.

Brāhmaṇa texts represent embryonic council of ministers is wrong for their list includes such figures as carpenter, messenger etc. The Later Vedic society was also quite illiterate,[1] had no coinage and only a very weakly developed mercantile system.

But soon strains and tensions appeared in the tribal structure of Vedic society. Chiefs (*rājan*) began to look on themselves as absolute owners of the tribal lands, and to apportion them to whom they chose. The *rājan* no longer remained a mere tribal leader, first among his peers, but became a real king, with a rudimentary governmental system, claiming, with Brāhmaṇical support, almost unlimited rights over his subjects. The old tribal assemblies largely disappeared, to be replaced by royal courts.

According to R. S. Sharma, "Certain material conditions favoured the rise of the *mahājanapadas*. In Punjab and the upper Gangetic plains the process of large-scale settlements had started much earlier, but in the middle Gangetic plains large states were the products of the material culture associated with the phase of the North Black Polished Ware. So far nearly 570 NBP sites have been counted in northern India, Central India and the Deccan, but most of them are located in eastern U.P. and Bihar. They suggest beginnings of large-scale settlements in the alluvial soil since the sixth century B.C. or so. The use of iron for crafts and agriculture was an essential feature of the NBP culture, although iron was also associated with some other types of pottery. The two factors which made iron a cheaper and convenient metal to use were its availability in large quantities and the technological skill to make it more carburised. We have evidence for both these things. Some iron artifacts,

[1]We have elsewhere shown that art of writing was unknown in the Vedic and Early Buddhist age and that the Brāhmī script was invented in the early Maurya period (Vide our paper 'Brāhmī Script: an Invention of Early Maurya Period', in *The Origin of Brāhmī Script*, ed. by S.P. Gupta and K.S Ramachandran, Delhi, 1979, pp. 1-53; also our work *Kauṭilya and Megasthenes*, Meerut, 1985, Ch. 12, pp. 82-100). In his paper mentioned above, A. L. Basham also remarks: "In the four major *Nikāyas* the only reference (to writing) I have found is *Aṅguttara*, i, 283, and it is doubtful if it means more than a mark or line. Drawing is referred to in *Majjhima*, i, 127. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Jātakas*, on the other hand, seem to take writing for granted (*e.g.*, *Vin.*, iii, 76; iv, 7; iv, 305; *Jāt.* ii, 174; vi, 369 etc.). This gives further evidence of the lateness of these texts." Here it may be noted that the references to writing in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the Jātakas have been taken by Basham as the indication of the lateness of the texts and not of the antiquity of the art of writing in India.

recovered in excavations from Rajghat (Varanasi) contain the same iron ore impurities as are found in the ores from Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj. This leaves little doubt that the users of iron in the middle Gangetic basin were familiar with the area containing the richest iron ores. Similarly an examination of iron artifacts belonging to early NBP times shows that the smiths were capable of putting more carbon in them and thus making the tools lasting and more serviceable."[1] Basham also notes that by this time iron, unknown in the *Ṛgveda* and probably a rare metal in the Later Vedic literature is widely used with obvious consequences in the easier clearing of forests for cultivation and the spread of agriculture. "If *ayas* in the *Ṛg Veda* means iron," Basham further remarks, "we must revise all our conceptions of the date of the text, for on a generous estimate no iron is attested in Indian archaeological sites before about 950 B.C. 'Small fragments and shapeless bits of iron' were found at S.P.I. 3, Kauśāmbī (G. R. Sharma, *Excavations at Kauśāmbī*, Allahabad, 1960, 45) but the dating (*ibid.*, 22) is doubtful. Iron was in fact hardly known outside Anatolia before the 13th century B.C. (O.R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, London, 1952, 83). *Śyāma ayas*, 'black bronze', in the *Atharva Veda*, xi, 3, i, 7 etc., suggests something new and uncommon, for which no specific word was yet coined. Similarly the adjective *kārṣṇāyasa* in the *Chāndogya Up.* (iv, 17.7)."[2]

"The second development that contributed to the material life of the period was the beginning of paddy transplantation in the middle Gangetic plains. With the large scale clearance of the extremely fertile middle Gangetic zone and the introduction of new methods of cultivation, the production per hectare may have doubled. The farmers therefore were in a position to support their households and dependents and able to pay taxes to the state."[3]

[1]Sharma, R. S., 'Material Progress, Taxation and State Formation in the Age of the Buddha', in *B. P. Sinha Felicitation Volume*, ed. Bhagwant Sahai, Delhi, 1987, pp. 248–49. Also see, Sharma, R. S., *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 96–99.

[2]Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 25, n. 10–11. For the date of the introduction of iron in India vide Singh, S. D., *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, V, 1962, pp. 212–16; Kosambi, D. D., *ibid.*, VI, 1963, pp. 309–18.

[3]Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 249. Also see, Jain, J. C., 'Early Jainism and Archaeological Cultures', *Śrī Dineśachandrikā*, ed. by Mukherjee, B. N., *et. al.*, Delhi, 1963, pp. 135–40.

The early Buddhist period was a period of expanding material culture, with far wider trade relations than in the previous period and much greater amenities of life for the wealthy, though a town proletariat had arisen which was perhaps much poorer than the humbler tribesmen of older times. In the Vedic text cities are hardly referred to. Now, in the time of the Buddha, populous towns and cities exist in all districts of the Ganges valley. A great and apparently very rapid change had taken place in the structure of Indian life and society.[1] "In the cities, men of many tribes rubbed shoulders together, uprooted from their lands and separated from their own clansmen. In most parts of the Ganga valley, ambitious kings had virtually eliminated the tribal institutions which had prevailed in earlier times. New groups of merchants and skilled craftsmen were gaining in wealth and influence."[2]

According to R. S. Sharma, the distribution of NBP suggests that "practically every state in the middle Gangetic plains had an upper social crust which used this delux pottery. This crust may have consisted of priests, warriors and substantial *gahapatis*, who appear as important elements in Pali and Sanskrit texts. The formation of a ruling order with the functions of fighting, administering, etc., legally assigned to it on a hereditary basis by the Dharmasūtras, is almost peculiar to the Indian situation. In later Vedic texts the *rājanya*, a relative or kinsman of the *rājā*, played the diminutive role of a chief. Now he practically came to be replaced by the kṣatriya khattiya order in the Dharmasūtras and Pali texts. Later Vedic rituals reflect a long drawnout struggle between the viś or the tribal peasantry on the one hand and the *rājanya* or the ruling chiefts (sic.) who insisted on collecting tributes from the tribesmen. By the age of the Buddha this struggle seems to have been ideologically resolved in favour of the kṣatriyas, whose ruling functions were clearly defined and accepted in the Dharmasūtras, of course with the support of the priests/brāhmaṇas. The Jain and Buddhist monks, who had no place in the brahmanical hierarchy, lent greater support to the emergent ruling order, for they accorded the khattiyas the first place in social ranking. Without going into the composition of the kṣatriya varṇa at any length, we may say that the kṣatriyas mainly comprised the chiefs of the ruling class and lineages, although many

[1]Basham, *op. cit.*
[2]*Ibid*, p. 16.

poor cousins may have been included in this category."[1]

Here and there to the north of the Gaṅgā the old tribal oligarchies survived. "The confederation of the Vajjis, the most important of these republics, was still, apparently, a force to be reckoned with, but there is good indication that its assembly, the governing body of the confederate tribes, was rapidly becoming inadequate to cope with new situations, and the tribal structure was undergoing great strain. Towards the end of the Buddha's life, or just after his death, the Vajjian confederacy was overwhelmed by the rising kingdom of Magadha."[2]

The Thought-Ferment

Factors of Change in the Realm of Ideas

Thus we observe that by the close of the Vedic age the period of tribal 'migrations' was over, the age of money-economy and iron had dawned, the Second Urban Revolution had led to the growth of towns and commerce, the development of trade had resulted in the emergence of a class of fabulously rich merchants, and organisation of crafts into guilds had made an impact on the caste system. All these changes on the one hand awakened the spirit of enquiry and, on the other, made the sense of social injustice against the background of the growing prosperity of some classes more acute, though G. C. Pande holds that social crisis "only indicates the need for fresh thinking without determining its nature. Social change is an occasion rather than a cause of spiritual change providing its antecedent rather than logical reference."[3] Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that "such a change could not but be reflected in the religious thought and practice of the time. The first definite criticism of the Vedic sacrificial religion appears in the early *Upanishads*, but only in a mild form. The sacrifices may have some validity, but they cannot save a man from death. The older ritualistic religion is not wholly satisfactory as an explanation of the cosmos, and the speculative search for a first principle, which is indeed as old as the later strata of the *Ṛg Veda*, is hence intensified by the Upaniṣadic seers. New proposals and doctrines are put forward, based on the super-natural insight gained from penance and meditation."[4] "In a similar age of

[1]Sharma, *op. cit.*

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]Pande, *Origins*, p. 311.

[4]Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

transition, Chinese sages put forward conflicting theories on the means of regenerating society, also with reference to first principles. But the best minds of India had no illusions about society, which was in any case degenerating by an inevitable process of cosmic decline. Salvation, for the Indian sage, was something which only a few individuals could achieve, and not society as a whole. Later, learned men were to codify the norms of orthodox social usage in *sūtras* and *śāstras*, but, in the time of the Buddha, men's thoughts turned to finding freedom from the bonds of custom rather than to preserving the traditional way of life."[1]

In the sixth-fifth century B.C. in middle Gaṅgā valley there were *kutūhala-śālās* or places for relaxation and debate. These were not only shelters for religious teachers during the rainy season (*varshā-vāsa*), for they attracted an audience also. Urban life released a degree of curiosity and free thinking which was made use of by some of the contemporary teachers as they were anxious to address large audiences.[2] The teaching was open to everyone and was perhaps less esoteric than the discourses of the Brāhmaṇical forest-dwellers. "The importance of a teacher was recognized by the size of his following as much as by the theories which he expounded. Such sizeable followings were more available on the fringes of large urban centres. The subjects debated were varied but the basic questions centred on the universality of human experience, knowledge and intuition. The halls were often located in parks and were demarcated by rows of trees, reminiscent of the forest. . . . The *kutūhala-sālās* were maintained by wealthy citizens or through royal patronage and were clearly important locations for debating a variety of doctrines. Most references to them mention discourses on matters of religious and ethical importance but inevitably the discussion must also have included other concerns. The gatherings at the *kutūhala-sālās* were doubtless also one avenue of assessing which sects should receive patronage."[3]

Some scholars find in the religious movements of the age of the Buddha a class affiliation and a revolt of the Kshatriyas against the Brāhmaṇas.[4] The facts that Jainism and Buddhism, the two most important religions of the period, were propounded by two Kshatriya

[1]*Ibid.*
[2]Thapar, R., *From Lineage to State*, Bombay, 1984, p. 153.
[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 153–54.
[4]Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 138–43; *The Vedic Age*, pp. 468–69.

princes and that they gave emphasis on the superiority of the Kshatriyas over Brāhmaṇas in their teachings lend colour to the theory. But as we have seen elsewhere[1] the Kshatriyas were taking interest in religio-philosophical pursuits even in the Upanishadic age. In the fourth Chapter of the *Gītā* (verses 1–2) there is a reference to the yoga tradition of the *rājarshis*. Then there are explicit references to the Brāhmaṇas joining the various non-Vedic or Śramaṇic orders. It is also not correct to attribute this intellectual activity only to the Śramaṇas as some have done,[2] for the rise and growth of Vaishṇavism and other orthodox devotional schools of thought in this period, were also to some extent the result of this thought-ferment.

Philosophies Prevalent in the Sixth-Fifth Centuries B.C.

In the age of the Buddha '*kammavāda*' and '*kiriyavāda*' with their diametrical opposites, '*akammavāda*' and '*akiriyavāda*', seem to have been the most discussed problems. Both the Jainas and the Buddhists claim to have been believers in kammavāda and kiriyavāda. According to B.C. Law there is no difference between 'kriyāvāda' and 'karmavāda' and both denote the doctrine of action.[3] But it is more likely that some difference was maintained between the two terms.[4] Roughly these terms signified that the miseries of man are not caused by Time, Destiny, Chance or Soul but by his own actions, because human actions contain a binding moral force the results of which cannot be escaped. This doctrine was thus opposed to '*Sassatavāda*' (the doctrine that the ultimate reality is śāśvata or eternal) and '*Adhichchasamuppāda*' (the hypothesis of fortuitous origin) both leading to the conclusion that no action can be called moral or immoral, for either it does not occasion any change or it is not a free act. In the *Mahāvagga* Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta calls Buddha a believer in akiriyavāda. Sometimes this passage is dismissed as having no import and occasioned only for the sake of accusation. But, as pointed out by G.S.P. Mishra, the accusation becomes clear if we take notice of the distinction between the conception and definition of action (kiriyā or kamma) put forward by the two. According to the Jainas, who stressed the physical nature of action, every action is bound to bring

[1] *RHAI*, I, Ch. 6.
[2] Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 36.
[3] Law, B.C., *Indological Studies*, II, p. 285.
[4] Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

about a result which has a bearing on what a man becomes. For example if a man commits an act of *hiṁsā* it will necessarily procure sin for him. It is immaterial whether he does it knowingly or unknowingly. On the other hand, the Buddha emphasized the psychological aspect of human action. According to him, an action was no action unless it was accompanied by will and consciousness and, for that reason, man was not affected by the results of those actions which were not intentional. As the Jainas did not accept this position Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta accused Buddha of akiriyavāda.[1]

Beside akiriyavāda, *uchchhedavāda* was equally despised by the Buddhists and the Jainas. It was a materialistic-nihilistic approach towards ethical and cosmological problems. The fundamental point of this philosophy was that nothing but what is corporeal is real Soul is not something distinct from the body and that there remains no soul, no life, no *kamma* after the disintegration of the bodily components. With death everything is annihilated (*uchchheda*).

Among other philosophical theories of the age of the Buddha reference may be made to *kālavāda*. It is referred to in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Mahābhārata* also. "Struck by irresistible tragedy of time and impressed with a sense of Fatalism one spoke of time with awe and in superlatives."[2] *Svabhāvavāda* seems to have had a point of contact with Sāṅkhyan as well as Gosālian views discussed below. It recognised the theory of development through immanent forces but denied free will.[3] *Niyativāda* believed in *niyati* or Necessity which may mean either a natural (causal) or supernatural (fatal) or moral (karmic) or logical necessity.[4] Opposed to it was *yadṛchchhavāda* which denied the principle of causality itself.[5]

Two other ideologies, not exactly philosophies, of the period were tapavāda and vinayavāda. *Tapavāda* promised final liberation by practising severe penances, which involved great suffering and pain to the body. The idea was prevalent among the Brāhmaṇa ascetics as well as some non-Vedic ascetics like the Ājīvikas and Nigaṇṭhas. The Buddha, who preached the doctrine of the 'Middle Way', did not share this belief. *Vinayavāda* preached that in order to attain the human end, one should be regulated and guided by some

[1] Mishra, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.
[2] Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 339.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 340.

fixed rules and actions. That is why the Buddha, Mahāvīra and other teachers of this age laid down codes of conduct for their followers.

As regards the nature of world and soul and the *summum bonum* of life, several philosophies were prevalent in this period. These views have been mentioned or discussed in detail in several Buddhist and Jaina suttas and some early post-Upanishadic Brāhmaṇa texts. But most of them have been dealt with in a systematic manner in the first discourse in the *Brahmajālasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The problems discussed in this sutta are as follows:

1. Four kinds of Sassatavādā (Eternalists).
2. Four kinds of Ekachchasassatavādā (Partial Eternalists).
3. Four kinds of Antānantikā (Limitists and Unlimitists).
4. Four kinds of Amarāvikkhepikā (Evasive Disputants).
5. Two kinds of Adhichchasamuppanikā (Fortuitous Originists).
6. Sixteen kinds of Saññivādā (Upholders of Conscious Soul after Death).
7. Eight kinds of Asaññivādā (Upholders of Unconscious Soul after Death).
8. Eight kinds of N'evasaññināsaññivādā (Upholders of neither Conscious nor Unconcious Soul after Death).
9. Seven kinds of Uchchhedavādā (Annihilationists).
10. Five kinds of Diṭṭhadhammanibbānavādā (Believes in the attainment of Nibbāna in this life).

All these views[1] have been described in the Buddhist texts, both Hīnayānist and Mahāyānist, as wrong (*michchhādiṭṭhi*) and are attributed to people's desire to adhere to the heresy of individuality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) consisting in regarding the body or any particular element of it as soul.[2]

Regarding the object of the exposition of these problems into the Buddhist texts, Buddhaghosha and later Mahāyānist scholars state that they were necessary for the exposition of Suññatā, by which Buddhagosha meant only Puggalasuññatā while the Mahāyānists meant both Pudgalaśūnyatā and Dharmaśūnyatā.[3] According to some modern scholars however the object of the Sutta is to give a brief summary of the non-Buddhist doctrines prevalent in North India in the age of the Buddha. According to N. Dutt the Sutta has no

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 38.
[3]*Ibid.*

such presumption.[1] He points out that the doctrines of the five heretical teachers and of Mahāvīra as also the philosophical views found in the Upanishads are beyond the purview of this Sutta. According to Dutt its main aim is to draw up a list of the possible theories about the world and soul that might haunt the minds of recluses (samaṇa-brāhmaṇas) who by means of intuition or meditation acquired certain powers but could not reach the highest state. "The so-called sixty-two views appear to be a systematic exposition of the experiences of a recluse or a thinker and have very little to do with the then existing opinions. There may be a few agreements between some of the sixty-two views and the philosophical tenets embodied in the Upaniṣads but that does not go to establish that the Sutta was composed with any reference to them, the cause of agreement being more or less accidental."[2] According to G. C. Pande, however, though it "is unquestionable that the sutta under consideration owes much to Buddhist systematisation yet the acceptance of Dutt's view must be qualified by the following facts: (*a*) Some of the views *mentioned in the Brahmajālasutta can be shown to have been actually* held by the non-Buddhist thinkers; (*b*) some views were, according to the sutta itself, believed because of reason (Takka), not special mystical experience; and, finally, (*c*) a good deal of the 'experiences of a Buddhist monk' were the same as of some or the other non-Buddhist thinkers."[3]

In any case one may agree with N. Dutt when he says that the *Brahmajālasutta* has served two important purposes: it disabuses our minds of many deep-rooted notions about the world and soul, and cautions us against interpreting the doctrine of Buddha in the light of our pre-conceived notions. For example, it may be pointed out that the notion of ātman as a permanent and immaculate entity, existing within our body, unaffected by our deeds (*karma*) is likely to distort the true import of the *attā* or *puggala* of the Buddhist texts. Similarly the doctrine of nihilism (*uchchhedavāda* or *natthatta*) may influence our interpretation of *anattā* or *suññatā* doctrine. As a typical instance N. Dutt quotes the *Majjhima Nikāya* where an eternalist (Sassatavādin) hears Buddha's teaching about the attainment of Nibbāna by the destruction of passion, desires, wrong views, etc. and wrongly

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 35 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[3] Pande, *Origins*, p. 352.

concludes that the Buddha was an annihilationist (*uchchhedavādin*).[1]

Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas

The religious sects of early Buddhist age may broadly be grouped as Brāhmaṇical and non-Brāhmaṇical, the former being referred to as *āstika* and the latter as *nāstika*. Āstika or Brāhmaṇic does not mean theistic. It denotes the systems which recognize the Vedas and their branches as supreme authority. For example Sāṅkhya is usually regarded as an atheistic philosophy, yet it is a Brāhmaṇical system, because it accepts the authority of the Vedas (*Veda prāmāṇyam*). Buddhism and Jainism are regarded as *nāstika* or non-Brāhmaṇical because they do not accept the authority of the Vedic texts. Manu defines *nāstika* as a person who challenges the authority of the Vedas (*nāstiko Vedanindakaḥ*). According to another view *āstika* is one who believes in the existence of the future world, etc. According to this interpretation, the Buddhists and the Jainas are not *nāstikas*. Nāgārjuna, the famous Buddhist scholar, uses the term in this sense when he says, "A *nāstika* is doomed to hell". It will thus be a misnomer to dub the Buddhists and the Jainas as *nāstikas*. They should rather be called *avaidikas* (non-Vedic sects).

The Buddhist and Jaina literatures appear to speak of all the non-Brāhmaṇical systems as Śramaṇa in the frequent expression '*samaṇa vā brāhmaṇa vā*'. In that age it was a common practice that a person who intended to lead a homeless life and thought that he could not realize the Truth by his personal efforts, went to some religious teacher for instruction. Such teachers gathered around them a large number of disciples as is obvious from the instances of the Jaṭila teachers of Urvela and Sañjaya of Rājagaha. In the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*[2] Samaṇas are distinguished as those who are not Brāhmaṇas by birth but have renounced the worldly life while Brāhmaṇas are those who are born in Brāhmaṇa families and who are more interested in religion and philosophy than in secular affairs. The terms Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa are found in combination in the works of Pāṇini[3], Patañjali[4] and Megasthenes[5] also, and in the

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 62.
[3]Agrawala, V. S., *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 383 f.
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 65.

inscriptions of Aśoka.[1] According to Patañjali the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas belonged to rival groups. In the Buddhist texts *paribbājakā* and *tapassino* are generally referred to as Samaṇas. In the *Papañchasūdanī* an Ājīvika saint is described as a Samaṇa.[2] The Jainas and the Buddhists usually employ the term Samaṇa for all the non-Brāhmaṇa ascetics.

The dichotomy between the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas, was so sharp that Patañjali refers to it as synonymous with the relationship of the snake to the mongoose or of the cat to the rat.[3] The Brāhmaṇas were deeply embedded in the community and could not exist as a category outside it. The Śramaṇas and Saṅnyāsins deliberately opted out of society as is reflected in the *Upanishads* and the *Āraṇyakas* where their main intention was to think and act away from social obligations. Distance was further maintained by restricting the membership of such groups by and large to the upper castes.[4] The Śramaṇas—the Nirgranthas, Ājīvikas, Buddhists and other sectarian groups—preferred a middle course. At one level they renounced the society but at another level they returned to it and were dependent on the lay community.[5] In fact the Buddhist lay follower (*upāsaka*) played a major role in supporting the Church and in return was ministered to by the *bhikkhus*. The need for an institutional base, the monastery, made the dependence on the lay community even greater and in this there was competition among the various new sects as well as between them and the Brāhmaṇas. The antagonism was at the ideological level while competition was for patronage. The ire of most was directed against the Chārvākas and the Lokāyata sects since they mocked even the efficacy of monkhood.[6]

The attitude of the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas towards ascetic life was basically different. Their differences emanated from their general outlook towards social and moral problems. The early Vedic literature contains the first expressions of Indian moral consciousness. Here we find emphasis on will, choice and action and on the necessity of directing them in accordance with the cosmic laws or Ṛta. The concept of Ṛta or Dharma gradually crystallized into three

[1] *RE*, XIII.
[2] Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[3] *Mahābhāshya*, I. 4.9, I, 476.
[4] Thapar, Romila, *From Lineage to State*, Bombay, 1984, p. 152.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

concrete socio-ethical orders—the varṇa organisation, the order of *āśramas* and the order of ritual observances, both *gṛhya* and *śrauta*.[1] We have already discussed how the varṇa organisation evolved and how the Vedic society, which originally recognised only the first two stages in the life of an individual, accepted the third stage of repairing to the forest as a result of the decline of the rituals and increase in the popularity of *upāsanā*.[2] The recognition to the fourth *āśrama* was given quite late and very grudgingly in order to accommodate those who had begun believing in the other-worldly pessimistic ideology of rebirth in accordance with one's *karmans* and whose number was gradually increasing. Similarly, earlier the Vedic society subscribed only to the *trivarga* doctrine—the doctrine that the goal of human life is to pursue *kāma* and *artha* in accordance with *dharma*. The addition of the concept of *moksha* as the highest goal of life to the doctrine of *trivarga* leading to the emergence of the doctrine of *chaturvarga* or *purushartha*, was obviously a development when the Upanishadic thinkers accepted the attainment of Brahma as the *summum bonum* of life.

However, from the practical point of view the notion of obligation of giving in response to what one has received from society and gods continued to constitute the key-stone in the arch of Vedic social ethics.[3] In contrast to this Śramaṇism cut man loose from the sense of dependence on gods and also struck a blow on the doctrine of social obligations. It replaced gods by the force of *karman*; what man receives he does not owe to gods but to his past actions. Further, as man cannot avoid moral consequences of his actions, he must eschew egoism, violence, etc. which are, according to the Śramaṇic view, the main evils, and pursue morality. Hence it is in the corpus of the monastic rules of various ascetic religions and sects that one can find concrete shape and form of their ideal of asceticism. These rules tended to regulate food, drink, clothes, dwelling, begging of alms and religious practices of monks down to the minutest details. Even for the lay-men and lay-women the ascetic sects formulated such rules though these were much less vigorous in nature. For example, the Jainas distinguished the *mahāvratas* of the monks from the *aṇuvratas* of the laity. Similarly, the *Sigālovādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* of the Buddhists describes the *gihivinaya* or the discip-

[1]Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 29.
[2]*RHAI*, I, p. 129 ff.
[3]Kane, P. V., *HD*, II, Pt. 2, pp. 942–46.

linary rules for the Buddhist laity. In the description of the duties of the householders the Śramaṇic sects laid comparatively greater emphasis on social obligations.

The Brāhmaṇas regarded the Vedas as their sacred code and permitted one to become a Sannyāsin only after he had passed through the other three preceding stages or āśramas which provided him the opportunity to clear off all his obligation to the society. Also, according to this theory only a *dvija* could become a *parivrājaka.*[1] The Śramaṇas, on the other hand, generally did not give much consideration to age or caste. The Buddha maintained that just as after merging in the ocean the rivers lose their identity, in the same way a man, be he a Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya or Śūdra, who seeks refuge with his Order, forsakes his former name, gotra or jāti.[2] The mendicants usually lived in forests and maintained the least possible contact with society, going to the villages and towns only for begging alms or when invited by the people. They wandered from one place to another. When once the Buddha remained at the same place during all the three seasons it caused a social resentment and denunciation. However during rainy season the mendicants lived at one place. It was called the *Varshāvāsa. Varshāvāsa* (rain-retreat period) and *pravāraṇā* (notice of the end of Varshāvāsa) had become established customs. According to the *Mahāvagga* the followers of each ascetic sect assembled together on the eighth, fourteenth and fifteenth day of the fortnight and indulged themselves in religious discourses to which the lay-devotees came to listen.[3] The ceremony was called Uposathā (Upavastha) and had a significant place even in the Brāhmaṇical ritual. On the suggestion of Bimbisāra it was introduced in the Buddhist saṅgha.

The ascetic sects usually had the same basic outlook towards non-injury, non-worldliness, etc. but differed from each other in respect of their clothes, food, alms-bowl and detailed rules of monastic life. They wore various types of clothes, while there were some who renounced all clothes and preferred to live nude. The Buddhists were granted the use of three clothes. Mahāvīra had renounced all clothes for himself but permitted his followers to wear one single robe owing to which they were called 'ekasāṭakas' by Gosāla. With regard to alms-bowl the Buddha permitted the use

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Mishra, G.S.P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 37.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

of those made of iron or clay. On the other hand, the Ājīvikas condemned the use of an alms-bowl and received their alms in hands. Rules regarding the nature of the acceptable food, too, varied from sect to sect. The Brāhmaṇa ascetics did not accept sweets and took only those parts of plants which became detached spontaneously. The Ājīvikas could accept cold water, unboiled seeds and specially prepared food but the Jainas forbade all these three. A Buddhist monk, however, could take anything received in alms but only once a day and at the right time. Views differed also with regard to the acceptability of many other articles like tourch, walking-stick, waterpot, etc.[1]

Of the Śramaṇa sects of the age of the Buddha, Buddhism and Jainism occupy the foremost rank. Alongwith them there were other sects which have left no independent literary documents. They are frequently criticised by the Buddha and Mahāvīra in their discourses. They do not always represent their best side; probably they do not always represent even the correct picture of their doctrines. The common features of all these sects seem to have been the following:

(1) They challenged the authority of the Vedas.
(2) They admitted into their gaṇa or saṅgha everybody irrespective of his caste and āśrama.
(3) They observed a set of ethical norms.
(4) They practised a detached life with a view to liberating themselves from the bondage of the world.
(5) They could take to a life of renunciation (*pravrajyā*) any time after passing over the minor age.

Though like the Brāhmaṇas, the Śramaṇas observed the practice of begging the food (*bhikshācharyā*), yet in the Śramaṇa tradition brahmacharya had a quite different connotation. In the beginning among the Brāhmaṇas the term brahmacharya meant the observance of certain rules requisite for the study of the Vedas and the one who studied them near a teacher was called brahmachārin. The first stage of human life thus attained the name of Brahmacharyāśrama. But, in the Upanishadic age, Brahman came to mean the ultimate truth. Therefore now brahmacharya came to signify living a particular system of life conducive to the attainment of the highest truth.[2] In the Śramaṇa tradition also the term *brahmachariya* was

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[2] Cf. Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 331.

identified with the way of life leading to the ultimate truth. Thus, while the original meaning of the term was expressive of an āśrama, the new meaning denoted the spiritual exertion and training of anyone coming from any class or caste in the context of the ascetic code. It is generally in the latter sense that it is used in the Buddhist literature. The life that a śramaṇa seeker of the truth had to lead in this stage was naturally not an easy-going one. It involved difficulties regarding his food, clothing, shelter, etc. which led to the belief that self-mortification and severe austerities were the only source of emancipation. Devadatta's demand to introduce more strict rules in the Buddhist sangha might have been motivated by a genuine feeling occasioned by the general atmosphere around him in the midst of which the Buddhist monastic rules appeared very worldly and relaxed.[3] The Jainas, viewing from their own standpoint, accused the Buddhists of a luxurious living because the Buddhist doctrine of the 'Middle Way' tended to minimize the hardships involved in *brahmachariya*.

Religious Leaders of the Age

The non-Vedic Śramaṇa religious bodies are known to us only through references to their teachers and tenets scattered in the vast literatures of the Buddhists and the Jainas The *Vinaya* refers to Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta with whom the Buddha had personal contact before his Enlightenment. From the *Vinaya* it appears that the famous teachers of north-eastern India were called *titthiyas*. The term originally did not belong to any particular sect, though the Buddha sometimes used it in the sense of heretics. The religious teachers whom the Buddha described as heretic (*titthiya-tīrthakara*) are : Pūraṇa Kassapa, Pakudha Kachchāyana, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta. The *Chullavagga* contains an account of a supernormal magical show by Piṇḍola Bharadvāja with regard to a sandal-wood alms-bowl which a śreshṭhī of Rājagṛha got fixed on the top of a bamboo declaring that it will be his who could take it from there with his supernatural powers. Among those who claimed such powers but were proved unsuccessful were Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kachchāyana and Nigaṇṭha

[3]Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

Nāṭaputta. Their doctrines very probably did not last long, except those of the Jainas and the Ājīvikas.

Pūraṇa Kassapa

According to the Buddhist texts Pūraṇa Kassapa (Pūrṇa Kāśyapa) was a respectable teacher (*tīrthakara*) and leader of a religious sect. He was, most probably, born in a Brāhmaṇa family, as his name suggests. His name Pūraṇa (=Pūrṇa) also indicates that he was regarded as fully enlightened and perfect in wisdom. It is said that when Ajātaśatru, the king of Magadha, once visited him, Pūraṇa expounded his views thus: "To him who acts or causes another to act, mutilates or causes another to mutilate, punishes or causes another to punish, causes grief or torment, trembles or causes another to tremble, kills other creatures, takes what is not given, breaks into houses, commits dacoity or robbery or tells lies, to him thus acting, there is no guilt . . . no increase of guilt would ensue . . . In giving alms, in offering sacrifices, in self-mastery, in control of senses, and in speaking truth, there is neither merit nor increase of merit."[1] Thus Pūraṇa appears to have been an amoralist believing that a person neither earns merit by pious acts such as gifts, sacrifices, or by abstinence from evil acts, and nor demerit by killing, stealing, adultery or speaking falsehood. It may mean just akiriyā ('one never really acts') or that the body enjoys or suffers according to its deeds but not the soul; one might do whatever one pleases without becoming sinful or virtuous.[2] The Jaina Sūtras also attribute no-action theory to Pūraṇa. However, according to Aiyaswami Sastri, this probably does not represent the correct view of Kassapa, for no system of thought in India, except the materialistic Chārvāka, is known to deny any merit or demerit to actions.[3] According to Barua, Pūraṇa was an advocate of the theory that the soul was passive (*nishkriya*), no action could affect it, and it was beyond good and bad.[4] That is why Śilāṅka, a Jaina commentator, identifies the doctrine of Akārakavāda with the Sāṅkhya view.[5] But as pointed out by N. Dutt neither Sāṅkhya and nor Vedānta teaches non-existence of karmāic effects. It is the body or Prakṛti which functions and

[1]Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* (Sacred Books of the Buddhists), I, p. 69 f.

[2]Pande, *Origins*, p. 347.

[3]*The Cultural Heritage of India* (*CHI*), I, p. 390.

[4]Barua, B. M., *A History of Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, 1921, p. 279.

[5]*Ibid.*

reaps the fruits of its deeds in this life and in future existences. Further, neither of these two schools denies Saṁsāravāda; hence they could not have fully supported Pūraṇa Kassapa's view.[1]

Pūraṇa Kassapa was a supporter of *ahetuvāda* (no-cause theory) also. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*[2] the Buddha states that no *hetu* (cause) and no *pachchaya* (condition) are accepted by Pūraṇa Kassapa for one's becoming either defiled or purified. Abhaya also reports that Kassapa accepted no cause for *ñāṇa* (knowledge) and *dassana* (insight).[3] Hence Barua believes that Pūraṇa was a supporter of *adhichchasamuppāda* (fortuitous origin) or *ahetuvāda* referred to in the *Brahmajālasutta*.[4]

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, two Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇas state to the Buddha that Pūraṇa Kassapa claimed to be always in possession of *ñāṇadassana* (introspective knowledge), while walking or staying etc., and that he perceived the finite world through infinite knowledge (*anantena ñāṇena antavantaṁ lokaṁ jānam*), while they attribute to the Jainas the theory of perceiving the finite world through finite knowledge.[5] Elsewhere the Buddha describes Kassapa as possessing the power of telling that a particular dead person was reborn at a certain place.[6]

Pakudha Kachchāyana

According to the Buddhist texts Pakudha Kachchāyana (Prakruddha Kātyāyana) was one of the six heretic teachers (*titthiyas*). He was also a leader of some religious body. Buddhaghosha informs that Pakudha was his personal name and Kachchāyana his family (*gotra*) name. The term '*pakudha*' has been traditionally interpreted as *prakruddha* or *kakudha* which mean the same thing. Assuming *Kakuda* to be the original and correct form meaning 'a man having a hump on his back', Barua connects Pakudha Kātyāyana with Kabandhī Kātyāyana, one of the pupils of Pippalāda of the *Praśna*

[1]Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 28 f.

[2]*CHI*, I, p. 391.

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]*Ibid.* Contra G. C. Pande (*Origins*, p. 348) who remarks, "the assumption of Dr. Barua about Adhiccasamuppāda is false, since the Sāṅkhya thinkers were not disbelievers in causality. Events may have nothing to do with 'soul' and yet may not be fortuitous in origin."

[5]*CHI*, I, p. 391.

[6]*Ibid.* Ānanda, the disciple of the Buddha, wrongly ascribes to Pūraṇa Kassapa Makkhali Gosāla's doctrine of six classes of human beings probably because Gosāla also had the title Pūraṇa (*CHI*, I, p. 391, n. 12).

Upanishad.[1] But Kabandhī Kātyāyana is described as a *Brahmanishṭha* in the Upanishad. Buddhaghosha records that Kachchāyana never touched cold water. He never even crossed the river or a marshy pathway, lest his vow should be transgressed.[2]

The philosophical ideas of Pakudha Kachchāyana are known from *Sāmaññaphalasutta* and the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* represents him as a pluralist and a semi-materialist. He believed that a being is composed of seven elements (*kāya*) existing immutably in emptiness (*vivara*)—earth, water, air, fire, pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*dukkha*) and soul (*jīva*). These seven elements are neither created nor moulded. They are barren and fixed as a rock and do not produce anything and do not interact on one another. They neither move nor change nor hinder one another so as to cause pain or pleasure or indifference. Hence, there is neither killer nor instigator of killing, neither hearer nor preacher, neither learner nor teacher. If a sword passes through the body of a being, it does not destroy it; it only slips through the interval between the elements forming the body.[3] According to G. C. Pande the concept of *vivara* was used to explain apparent motion, but it was not regarded as a substance; it was understood as mere 'non-resistance' hypostatized.[4]

The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, on the other hand, presents *Ātmashashṭhavāda* (which resembles the doctrines of Pakudha) as a system of six categories omitting pleasure and pain and adding ether or space (*ākāśa*) in their place.[5] The Buddha criticised the doctrine of Pakudha as a kind of Eternalism (Sassatavāda) and Annihilationism (Uchchhedavāda).[6] As pointed out by H. Ui if this Sassatavāda (Eternalism) is developed, "the resultant must be the atomic theory'. Hence it is likely that this Sassatavāda is the same as Aṇuvāda (atom-theory).[7] According to Barua also Pakudha was Empedocles of India for, according to both, the four elements are root-things and the formative principle is two-fold: 'love' and 'hatred' for Empedocles, and 'pleasure' and 'pain' for Kātyāyana.[8]

[1]Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
[2]Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 392.
[3]Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I, p. 74.
[4]Pande, *Origins*, p. 348.
[5]*Ibid.*
[6]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[7]Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 392.
[8]Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 283–84.

Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta

Sañjaya, son of Belaṭṭhi or Vairāṭi, was another religious leader of the sixth century B.C. He was probably an elder contemporary of the Buddha. He is said to have presided over a band of 250 disciples. He is probably identical with Parivrājaka Sañjaya, the teacher of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, who joined the Buddhist saṅgha alongwith his other disciples impressed as they were by Buddha's doctrine of causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*).[1] Parivrājaka Suppiya was another follower of Sañjaya. Sañjaya is famous for the view which was scepticism on the one hand and a primitive stage of criticism of knowledge on the other, like that of some of the Sophists of the Greek philosophy. He is generally described as an agnostic (*ajñānavādī*), a sceptic unwilling to give any definite answer to the problems of the other world, the Opapātika beings, the law of kamma, etc. which were according to him, indeterminable. This position is similar to Buddha's doctrine that problems such as 'whether the soul is identical with body or not', 'whether an emancipated being exists after death or not', etc. are indeterminable (*avyākata*) and should be left aside. But unlike the Buddhists, Sañjaya carried the argument further when he refused to give any answer to the problem of responsibility. In the *Brahmajālasutta*[2] a follower of Sañjaya is described as Amarāvikhepika, that is a person who, when asked a question, would equivocate and wriggle out like an eel. According to Barua the Aviruddhakas mentioned in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* were also the followers of Sañjaya; they were called Amarāvikkhepikas for their philosophical doctrines and Aviruddhakas for their moral conduct. However the Buddhists have not described them as Akiriyavādin (non-believer in karmāic effects).[3] In the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, the agnostics are criticised as blind men: If they cannot reach the Truth themselves how can they lead others to it ?

Ajita Kesakambalin and the Chārvākas

Among some thinkers of the period materialistic nihilism was popu-

[1]Jacobi supposes that *Mahāvagga* I.23 and 24 refer to agnostic Sañjaya (*SBE*, 45, p. xxix). According to this text when Sāriputta and Moggalāna went to Sañjaya and told him of their decision to become the followers of the Buddha, he tried to prevent them by offering a temptation of combined leadership over his Church. However, he was unsuccessful and the consequent grief caused him blood vomits.

[2]*CHI*, I, p. 399.

[3]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

lar. Ajita Kesakambalin was one of them. He is one of the six non-Brāhmaṇical teachers mentioned in the early Buddhist and Jaina texts. He was held in great honour by the people. He was called Kesakambalin because he put on a blanket of human hair. In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha forbids his own disciples to wear *kesakambala* because it was a garment worn by the heretics.

Ajita believed that a human being is made of four elements (*chātummahābhūtiko ayaṁ puriso*). When he dies, the earthy in him relapses to earth, the fluid to water, the heat to fire, the windy to air and his faculties (*indriyāṇī*, that is the five senses and the mind) to space (*ākāśa*). Ajita denied the existence of after-life. It is the fools who speak of the existence (of the soul, etc.). A person's earthly existence ends on the funeral pyre. When the body dies, both the foolish and the wise perish alike. Nothing survives after death (*bhasmībhūtasya punarāgamana kutaḥ*).[1]

The ethical and religious teachings of Ajita were a corollary to his radical materialism. He believed that there is no merit in sacrifice or offerings. No fruit results from good and evil deeds. No benefit results from the service rendered to mother and father. There is no demerit if one commits evil deeds. He believed that no one has reached perfection by following the right path, and there is none who, as a result of knowledge, has experienced this world as well as the next.[2]

This doctrine of Ajita is clearly related with Bārhaspatya school of thought, founded by Bṛhaspati. The Bārhaspatya school is also called 'Chārvāka' in the *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* of Mādhava and 'Lokāyata' in the *Shaḍdarśana-samuchchaya* of Haribhadra. Whether 'Chārvāka' was a personal name or epithet, it is difficult to say. It is certain however that the doctrines of this school were a complete denunciation of the Vedas, their authors and the religion they teach. Thus it is said that the Vedas are the work of men-cheats, hypocrites and flesh-eaters and that their language is utter gibberish. Reference is also made to certain unclean customs connected with the horse-sacrifice.[3]

The Chārvākas sought to propagate that one should seek his own happiness by whatever means he can in this life. The performance of acts that are supposed to bring fruits in the next life is an exercise

[1]*CHI*, I, p. 398; Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*

in futility. As everything ends with death, there is no point in performing sacrifices and other supposedly moral acts. This doctrine was vehemently criticised by the Buddha as *uchchhedavāda* or annihilationism, that is the doctrine that a being disappears for ever after death with the dissolution of his body. A somewhat similar account of the *nāstikas* or Chārvākas is given in the *Sūtrakṛtānga* in which it is stated that the five gross elements produce Ātman. On the dissolution of the elements, however, the living beings cease to exist. . . 'there is neither virtue nor vice, there is no world beyond'.[1]

Dhīshaṇa, to whom is attributed this type of doctrine in the *Padma Purāna*, asserts that there is no God. The variegated world exists by itself. However, like Ajita he admitted only four elements and not the fifth, ākāsa.[2]

The Lokāyata or Lokāyatika was not unknown to the Buddhist authors also. The following conversation between a Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇa and the Buddha has been recorded in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* :[3]

The Brāhmaṇa:	Does everything exist (*sabbam atthi*)?
The Buddha:	To say that everything exists is the first view of the worldling (*lokāyatam*).
The Brāhmana:	Does not everything exist (*sabbaṁ na'tthi*)?
The Buddha:	To say so is the second view of the worldling.
The Brāhmaṇa:	Is everything one and identical (*sabbam ekattaṁ*)?
The Buddha:	To say so is the third view of the worldling.
The Brāhmaṇa:	Is everything separate (*sabbam puthuttaṁ*)?
The Buddha:	To say so is the fourth view of the worldling.

Therefore the Buddha preached the doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (i.e. the law of causation) avoiding the above extremes.

It is to be noted here that Ajita had postulated no solution for the phenomenon of knowledge. The Chārvākas, however, attempted to solve it in this way: when the four elements constitute the body, the spirit (*chaitanya*) comes into existence automatically as liquor is produced by fermentation of rice and molasses.

The Chārvākas, therefore, believed that perception is the only source of knowledge. That which cannot be perceived by the senses, does not exist. But this is too gross a proposition to stand scrutiny.

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p 31.
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*

As pointed out by the critics of this philosophy, when a Chārvāka goes out of his home on any occasion, his wife does not see him for a time. Does it mean that she becomes a widow during this period?

Pāyāsi-Paēsi was probably another materialist thinker of the age of the Buddha, though his chronological position is somewhat doubtful.[1] He also disbelieved in soul and agreed with Ajita in denying that anything real could correspond to 'the current transcendental ideas'.[2]

Makkhali Gosāla: The Ājīvika Sect

Of the five prominent non-Buddhist non-Jaina heretical sects which arose in or before the sixth century B.C. one alone, the Ājīvika,[3] enjoyed a long history of about two thousand years before it became extinct. It was probably founded by Nanda Vachchha and headed by Kisa Saṁkichcha after him. It acquired strength under Makkhali Gosāla who was a contemporary of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. The cult spread at one time from Avanti to Aṅga. Though both Jainism and Buddhism denounced Gosāla and his teachings, they quietly absorbed some of the tenets and practices of his school. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions Makkhali Gosāla as one of the six teachers each of whom was the leader of an order (*gaṇāchāriyo*), the founder of a sect (*titthakāro*), revered as a saint (*sādhu sammato*) and a homeless wanderer of long standing (*chira pabbajito*).

Gosāla is said to have been born somewhere near Śrāvastī. He left home for some unknown reason and became a homeless wanderer. His career as a wanderer covered about 24 years. He spent the first six[4] of these with Mahāvīra at Paṇiyabhūmi. At that time he was a follower of Pārśvanātha. He parted company with Mahāvīra on account of doctrinal differences and went to Śrāvastī where he attained Jinahood and became the leader of the Ājīvika sect. He is said to have expired sixteen years before Mahāvīra. In the *Bhagavatī*

[1]Pande, *Origins*, p. 351.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]The word is spelt as 'Ājīvaka' also. Cf. the term *Samayagājīva* of the Buddhists. For the etymology of the term cf. A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 103–4. He has discussed the views of Lassen, Burno and Hoernle also. Also see Barua, *Ājīvakas*, p. 11.

[4]According to the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* six years, but according the *Kalpa Sūtra* only one year. See, Barua, *Ājīvakas*, p. 7.

Sūtra, he is stated to have been a disciple of Mahāvīra at Nālandā, but it is highly unlikely.

The name of this teacher is variously spelt : Makkhali Gosāla in Pāli, Maṅkhaliputta Gosāla in Ardha Māgadhī, Markali in Tamil and Maskarin in Sanskrit. The Chinese tradition records his name as Maskari Gosāliputra and explains that Maskari was his gotra name and Gosāli was his mother's name. According to Pāṇini[1] *maskarin* was a wanderer who carried a *maskara* (bamboo staff) about him. Many other fanciful derivations of the name are suggested in ancient literature.[2]

Hoernle remarks that the name 'Ājīvika' was given to the followers of this sect by their opponents. By his conduct Gosāla laid himself open to the charge that he practised religious mendicancy not as a means of gaining salvation (*moksha*), but as a means of gaining livelihood. The Buddha is said to have denounced Gosāla as one of those who lived in inconsistency (*abrahmacharyāvāsa*) and as a bad man (*mogha purisha*). Rhys Davids opines that Ājīvikas were those who claimed to be strict in earning their means of livelihood. According to Charpentier Gosāla's father Makkhali was a mendicant bearing a picture board with the representation of Śiva. It is likely that the Ājīvikas earned their bread by showing pictures and not by mere begging. That astrology was almost a profession with the Ājīvikas is proved by an old tradition preserved in a Jātaka and the *Divyāvadāna*. This tradition agrees also with their belief in fatalism.

No trace of Ājīvika texts has been preserved, but scattered quotations from them are found in the Buddhist and Jaina literatures. From the tradition preserved in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, it may be presumed that the scriptures of the Ājīvikas consisted of ten Puvvas (eight Mahānimittas and two Maggas) like the fourteen Pūrvas of the Jainas.[3] The dialect adopted as the literary medium for their scriptures was closely allied to Ardha-Māgadhī. The South Indian tradition mentions as their scripture a text called the *Navakadir* (Nine Rays; a collection of nine works?) which most likely embodied the teachings of Maskarin. This was probably a Tamil version of an original Prakrit work. An idea of the Ājīvika philosophy may

[1] VI.1.154.
[2] Cf. *CHI*, I, p. 393 f.
[3] Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 47–51.

be formed with the help of the scattered references found in these and other texts.[1]

The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* gives the following account of the philosophy of Gosāla. Once an experiment was made by Gosāla together with Mahāvīra with a sesamum plant which being uprooted and destroyed reappeared in due time. From this Gosāla concluded that beings were subject to re-animation (*paüṭṭa parihāraṁ parihanti*) and not death and destruction. He added to it the doctrine that all beings were subject to a fixed series of existence from the lowliest to the highest and this series was unchangeable (*niyati saṅgatibhāva*) and every existence had its own unalterable characteristic as heat is of fire or coldness of ice. According to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* all beings and souls are without force, power and energy of their own. They get transformed by their fate (*niyati*), by the necessary conditions of the class to which they belong (*saṅgati*), and by their individual nature (*bhāva-pariṇatā*). They experience pleasure and pain according to their position in one or other of the six classes of existences. All those who reach the final beatitude will have to pass through 84,00,000 great kalpas, and then seven births as a deity, seven as a bulky (insensible) being, seven as a sensible being, and seven with changes of body through re-animation.[2]

Makkhali Gosāla denied the effect of deeds (*karman*) and energy (*vīrya*). He upheld fatalism of extreme type. He maintained that human effort is useless (*n'atthi purisakāre*), that a being is totally helpless; he can neither help himself nor others and nor he can attain perfection (*vimutti*) by his efforts. He must transmigrate from one existence to another, and it is only after repeated existences that he attains emancipation (*suddhi*). The consecutive existences of a being including the periods and types of existences are unalterably fixed (*niyata*). The several existences of a being may be compared to a ball of yarn uncoiling itself, the ultimate end of the yarn being *suddhi* or *vimutti* or the end of existence of a being.[3] That is why Ajātaśatru is said to have characterized this philosophy as *Saṁsāravisuddhi*, which according to G. C. Pande is very just characterization.[4]

[1]For Ājīvika doctrines see Hoernle in *ERE*, I; Barua, *Pre-Buddhist Philosophy of India*, Ch. XXI.

[2]*CHI*, I, p. 395 f.

[3]Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 29.

[4]Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 342 f.

According to the Ājīvikas there are eight kinds of results determinable at the stage of embryo : acquisition, loss, obstruction by impediments, migration to other place, suffering misery, enjoying pleasure, losing what is obtained, and birth and death. The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* mentions only six of them omitting the third and the fourth.

From the Tamil texts we learn that the Ājīvikas believed in five kinds of atoms : earth, water, fire, air, and life. Of these only life is endowed with knowledge, others are not. They are beginningless, eternal, and undivisible. They can severally assemble together and assume varied forms such as mountain, bamboo, diamond, etc. Only a man of divine vision can perceive single atoms. The life-atom, which is imperceptible, becomes embodied through its own *karman* ; when it enters a body, it takes all the qualities of the body as its own.[1]

According to the *Maṇimekhalai* (4th cent. A.D.), the Ājīvikas believed that there are six classes of beings—black, blue-black, green, red, yellow, and white. The final stage is Release (*vīḍu*), which is extremely white.[2] Buddhaghosha has made an attempt to explain in detail the various stages of existence envisaged in Gosāla's doctrines.[3] In the Jaina literature also the various states of existence distinguished by colour as black, dark, blue, green, red, golden and white have been dealt with in connection with the doctrines of the Ājīvikas. The distinctions made by colour, though not intelligible now, must have been a prominent feature of the philosophy of this sect.[4]

There are two kinds of released persons, *sambodhaka* and *maṇḍala*. The former always remain in the highest stage of life, while the latter come down to the earth to impart sacred knowledge to the world. In case all jīvas attain moksha, the spring of saṁsāra will dry up, so the Ājīvikas propounded the theory of *maṇḍala-moksha* according to which the jīvas that have attained *moksha* may come to saṁsāra in order to keep the latter moving.[5]

In the Jaina *Bhagavatī Sūtra* reference is made to the fact that the Ājīvikas had shifted their centre of activities to the Puṇḍra country at the foot of the Vindhya mountains, and that in their

[1] *CHI*, I, p. 396.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, pp. 161–4.
[4] Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
[5] *CHI*, I, pp. 396–97.

pantheon were included many Vedic and non-Vedic gods. The worshippers of two of these, Puṇṇabhadda (Pūrṇabhadra) and Maṇibhadda (Maṇibhadra), are referred to in the Buddhist *Niddesa* also, though as distinct from the Ājīvikas. Maṇibhadda and Puṇṇabhadda have been regarded as Yakshas by modern writers, but there is no doubt that the *Niddesa* distinguished them from the latter class of supernatural beings. The Pawaya inscription (1st cent. B.C.) of the pedestal of a statue, shows that a class of Maṇibhadra-bhaktas existed at one time and that Maṇibhadra was given the usual honorific title of *Bhagavat*.[1]

It is generally believed that the Ājīvikas adhered to a severe form of asceticism. Gosāla's reputation for ascetism is shown by several Jātaka stories and the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*[2] and other texts. During initiation they remained nude and pulled out their hair (though they were not always tonsured).[3] The early Buddhist texts at several places refer to the fact that the Ājīvika monks lived naked.[4] They had lay-devotees as well. The *Nīlakeśī*, a Tamil Jaina text, states that Gosāla exhorted his disciples to abide by strict moral observances, and that they observed *śīlas* though they denied their efficacy. According to another South Indian text the Ājīvikas worshipped the aśoka tree as god, denied the authority of the Vedas, practised severe asceticism, kept their body dirty (for want of daily bathing), gave up household life, covered their nakedness with mat-clothing, and carried in their hand a bunch of peacock feathers.[5] The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* says that they abstained from eating five kinds of fruits and also from eating roots, etc.[6] The *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* also describes the various kinds of austerities practised by the Ājīvikas. People of all castes and also women were allowed to enter the Ājīvika order. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, however, states that in the opinion of Gosāla no spiritual development can take place by moral observances. It is rather difficult to make out why the Ājīvikas should enjoin the moral observances and in the same breath deny their efficacy. According to N. A. Sastri it is likely that following the time-honoured fashion Gosāla approved the pursuance of the

[1]Cf. Bhattacharya, H. D., in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 463 f.
[2]Chakraborti, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 452, 455.
[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 453–4.
[4]Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 52 f.
[5]*CHI*, I, p. 394 f.
[6]*Ibid.*, p. 395.

moral and religious observances, even though in his opinion they were ineffective in doing any good.

It is not unlikely that the term '*niyati*' was introduced into Indian thought by the Ājīvikas. Manu and the compiler of the *Hitopadeśa* tried to disabuse the minds of the people of this faith in fatalism, though Bhartṛhari praised it in his *Nītiśataka*.

Mahāvīra and Jainism

In the age of the Buddha Jainism was known as Nigaṇṭha Dhamma (Nirgranthism). It was called as such because it laid great stress on non-possession and on renunciation of the house (*āgāra* or *gṛha*) which was considered a knot (*grantha*). It was also known by the general name Śramaṇa dharma (Śramaṇism), a term which was applied to all non-Brāhmaṇical sects. It believed that the conquest of the evil tendencies of attachment and hatred was the real end. As the promulgators of this ideal were regarded as Jinas (victors), their followers were given the name Jaina and their religion came to be known as Jainism.

The Jainas claim a great antiquity for their religion.[1] They believe that Mahāvīra, the contemporary of the Buddha, was their twenty-fourth Tīrthaṅkara (the founder of faith). The *Kalpasūtra* of Bhadrabāhu gives us the life-history of each Tīrthaṅkara or Jina.[2] Ṛshabhadeva or Adinātha stands first in this list. He is mentioned even in the *Vishṇu* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* as a great saint-king belonging to a very remote past. Further, as we have seen earlier in the *RV* itself there are found traces of the existence of religious thinkers known as Munis and Śramaṇas who may be regarded as the precursors of the Jaina faith. H. L. Jain even claims to have found a mention of Ṛshabhadeva in the *RV*.[3] According to later tradition he was a son of Marudevī and Nābhi, queen and king of Kosala. After deep and long meditation he received *Kevala jñāna* or the highest knowledge. He is said to have led a community of 84,000 śramaṇas, 300,000 nuns and other lay-devotees. He renounced his kingdom in favour of his sons and embraced the life of an ascetic.

[1]See Jacobi, Intro. to *SBE*, 45; Acharya Shri Tulsi, *Pre-Vedic Existence of Śramaṇa Tradition*, Calcutta, 1964; Jain, R. C., 'The Pre-Aryan Shramaṇic Spiritualism', *Muni Hazarimal Smṛti Grantha*, Beawar, 1965, pp. 12-26; Mehta, M. L., 'Antiquity of Jaina Culture', *Munishri Mishrīmalji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, Jodhpur, 1968, pp. 1-9.

[2]*SBE*, XXII.

[3]Cf. *RHAI*, I, p. 97; *supra*, p. 38.

According to the Jaina tradition at the time of the Mahābhārata war the Order was led by Neminātha, the twenty-second Tīrthaṅkara who is said to have belonged to the same Yādava family as Kṛshṇa. If the Mahābhārata war was fought in the 9th century B.C., a theory to which we are inclined to subscribe,[1] Neminātha may also be assigned to that period. It imparts some strength to his historicity[2] because Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrthaṅkara is usually placed in the eighth century B.C. The historicity of other Tīrthaṅkaras who preceded Neminātha is as yet a matter entirely of the Jaina faith.

Jainism gathered particular strength during the eighth century B.C. under Pārśvanātha.[3] He is said to have been the son of Vāmā, wife of Aśvasena, king of Banaras. He was the people's favourite or 'beloved of men' (*Purisādāniya*). He lived for 30 years as a householder. Then "after fasting for 3½ days without drinking water, he put on a divine robe and together with 300 men . . . entered the state of houselessness." On the 84th day of his deep meditation he obtained *Kevala jñāna*. Subsequently, he had "an excellent community of 16,000 śramaṇas with Āryadatta at their head", numerous others with separate heads and 2,000 female disciples. Pārśva died at the age of 100 'on the summit of Mount Sammeta' (Parasnath or Pareśanātha near Gomoh railway station) about 250 years before Mahāvīra's death. This gap between him and Mahāvīra, usually regarded as true, places him in the 8th century B.C.

The religion of Pārśva was called '*chāujjāma dhamma*' (*chātur-yāma dharma*) enjoining four vows of abstinence from violence (*paṇaivāya* or *hiṁsā*), untruth (*mushāvāya* or *asatya*), stealing (*adinnādāna* or *steya*) and possession (*bahiddhādāna* or *parigraha*). According to Jaina scholars, though the vow of chastity (*maithuna-viramaṇa* or *brahmacharya*) is not explicitly stated, yet it is implied in the 4th vow of *aparigraha*. These four vows show that Pārśva based his order of monks on moral principles and his first vow of non-violence suggests that he raised his voice of protest against animal sacrifices of the Vedic Brāhmaṇas. According to the *Āchārāṅga* Mahāvīra's parents, who were worshippers of Pārśva, 'repented,

[1]Cf. Goyal, S. R., 'Mahābhārata aura Dāśarājña Yuddhon kī Tithiyān', *Purākalpa*, Varanasi, 1974, IV, No. 1, pp. 5–18.

[2]It however does not mean that the details of his life as given in the Jaina texts are necessarily correct.

[3]See, Muni, Devendra, *Bhagavān Pārśva: eka Samīkshātmaka Adhyayana*, Poona, 1969; cf. also Shastri, Permanand Jain, 'Bhagavān Pārśvanātha', *Anekānta*, XVIII, No. 6, 1966, pp. 269–74.

confessed and did penance according to their sins, and on a bed of kuśa grass rejected all food, their bodies drying up by the last mortification of the flesh which ends in death.' This shows Pārśva's leanings towards repentance and self-mortification. He apparently taught that self-control (*saṁyama*) results in the cessation of karman and penance leads to its annihilation.

From the *Kalpasūtras* we learn that Pārśva had organised his Church by bringing all his disciples under four classes (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen), each headed by a Gaṇadhara. Pushpachūlā was the chief controller (*gaṇinī*) of the nunnery. The mention of nuns and laywomen suggests that he did not neglect women.

The belief in the historicity of Pārśva is confirmed by the Jaina canon which not only gives us some idea of his doctrines but preserves anecdotes about his followers. The account of Keśī, one of his disciples, in the canonical books is quite realistic. He is said to have converted King Paësi to the faith of Pārśva. He also held a disputation with Goyama (Gautama Indrabhūti), the chief disciple of Mahāvīra. Several other disciples of Pārśva[1] are said to have expressed a desire to exchange the religion of the four vows of Pārśva for the one with five vows of Mahāvīra. Even the parents of Mahāvīra are said to have belonged to the lay-following of Pārśva. Moreover, Jacobi has conclusively shown that a Buddhist Sūtra (*Sāmaññaphalasutta*) mistakenly attributes to Mahāvīra the religion of the four vows, which really belonged to Pārśva. Such a mistake could have occurred only if Pārśva actually had some following at that time. The conversation between Keśī and Goyama (Gautama) in the *Uttarādhayayana* testifies to the friendly relations between the followers of Pārśva and Mahāvīra and points out that, in spite of some minor differences, the two were essentially the same. By the very nature of the case, tradition has preserved only those points of Pārśva's teachings which differed from the religion of Mahāvīra, while all the common points are ignored.[2] The main outward difference between the two sets was that Pārśva allowed the use of a white garment by the monks, while Mahāvīra forbade even this. Hence the two Jaina sects are entitled Śvetāmbara (white-clad) and Digambara (sky-clad or naked). But such differences that are few in

[1]According to *Vyākhyāprajñapti* 9.32 Gāṅgeya, a follower of Pārśva, accepted the *pañchamahāvratas* of Mahāvīra. Such other followers of Pārśva were Ārya Kālāsavesiyaputta, Peḍhalaputta, etc.

[2]Cf. Ghatage, A. M.; in *AIU*, p. 412.

number make Mahāvīra definitely a reformer of an existing faith, and the addition of a vow, the emphasis on nudity and a more systematic arrangement of its philosophical tenets may be credited to his reforming zeal.[1] This fact is also brought out by the traditional life of Mahāvīra. We are told that unlike the Buddha, who at the beginning of his spiritual career lived with some teachers with whose teachings he became dissatisfied and finally found out the truth for himself, Mahāvīra followed a well-established creed, obviously that of Pārśva. Equally significant is the absence in Jainism of anything equal to Buddha's insistence that his followers should remember well his first sermon, suggestive of its novelty. Above all, the early Buddhist literature makes it quite clear that it regarded Mahāvīra not as a founder of a new sect, but merely as a leader of an already existing religious community.[2]

As the nature of pre-Mahāvīra Jaina doctrines is not fully known, some speculative thinking by modern scholars on this subject has been natural.[3] According to R. Williams some aspects of later Jainism may be regarded as ascribable to a pre-Mahāvīra and indeed a pre-Pārśva period. Among these he includes *sallekhanā* (when the body is cast aside like leaves shed by a tree); the pursuit of an ascetic way of life characterised by nudity and possessionlessness but not by *brahmacharya*; the use of some forms of worship including the ritual posture of devotion called *kāyotsarga* and the observance of *ahiṁsā* devolving from the postulations of forms of life such as *pṛthvirkāyas*, *vāyu-kāyas*, *tejaḥ-kāyas* and *vanaspati kāyas*. These last elements, usually termed animistic, are the proof and measure of the antiquity of Jainism. Williams also believes that the ideals from which they evolved was particularly popular in Gujarat and were associated with a system of number magic in which the figure four was of paramount importance and the cult of sacred mountains, one of which, namely Girnar, was closely linked with Neminātha.[4]

[1] *Ibid.* According to Dharmananda Kosambi (*Pārśvanātha kā Chāturyāma Dharma*, pp. 24–26) before becoming enlightened, the Buddha had entered the Pārśva Order for some time.

[2] Ghatage, *op. cit.*

[3] Cf. Jacobi, *SBE*, 45, Intro.; 'Mahāvīra and his Predecessors', *IA*, IX; Jain, Bhagchandra, 'Antiquity of the Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. 1, 1960, pp. 3–6; Phaltane, L. A., 'An Ancient Form of Jainism', *Jain Antiquary*, XXII, No. 2, pp. 17–20.

[4] Williams, R., 'Before Mahāvīra', *JRAS*, 1966, Pt. 1–2, pp. 2–6.

Brāhmaṇism and Popular Cults in the Age of the Buddha

Various Types of Brāhmaṇas

By the age of the Buddha apart from the Purohita or Ṛtvika Brāhmaṇas, who formed the class of professional priests, there had emerged other classes of Brāhmaṇas also. Firstly, there were those Brāhmaṇa householders who enjoyed the revenues of villages given to them by kings. These Brāhmaṇas were very rich and are described as Mahāsāla. They occasionally celebrated costly sacrifices and usually ran academies where students from neighbouring areas came for learning the Vedic lore. They are criticised by the Buddha as being mere reciters of the Vedic hymns and for teaching the ways and means for attaining Brahmaloka which nobody has seen.

Then there were Brāhmaṇa Paribbājakas (Parivrājakas) who according to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* took *pravrajyā* with the object of attaining Him. But in the Upanishads the line of demarcation between the Parivrājakas and the Sannyāsins is not well-defined. In the Pali works Parivrājakas are described as wanderers. Probably Jaṭilas, mentioned in the Buddhist texts, were a category of the Parivrājakas. The *Vinaya* presents the Jaṭilas as an important sect with whom the Buddha had very good relations. They lived in large groups, had group-leaders, engaged themselves in austerities and performed sacrifices. They were called Aggikā Jaṭilikā. According to G. C. Pande they were colonies of Vānaprasthas. Probably they represented the orthodox priestly section of the ascetics and were not small in number. As their name suggests, they kept long hairs on their head. Megasthenes, who divided the philosophers of the Maurya period into Brachmanes (Brāhmaṇas) and Sarmanes (Śramaṇas), speaks of a Śramaṇa class called 'hylobei'. They lived in the woods, where they subsisted on leaves of trees and wild-fruits and wore garments made of the bark of trees. They abstained from sexual intercourse and wine.[1] They are generally identified with the Jaṭilas. They were grouped by Megasthenes with the Śramaṇas probably because of their austerities. The *Mahāvagga* speaks of Uruvelā near Gayā as a great

[1]McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 101-102.

Jaṭila settlement. Uruvelakassapa, Nadīkassapa, and Gayākassapa, the three Jaṭila teachers, were followed by a large number of disciples. The Jaṭilas were held by the people in great reverence and on the occasion of their religious sacrifices people used to come with articles of food, etc.

The Jaṭilas are expressly called Karmavādins and Kriyāvādins and, on that ground, were granted exception from *parivāsa* training that the followers of other sects desiring admission to the Buddhist saṅgha had to undergo. According to G. S. P. Mishra,[1] however, it was a posthumous ruling occasioned on account of great Jaṭila influence in the Buddhist saṅgha. Obviously, the conversion of these Jaṭila teachers was a great achievement of the Buddha. According to the *Chullavagga* the whole activity of the First Buddhist Council was controlled by Mahākassapa, a former Jaṭila leader. The reference to the *ayyāgāra* of Uruvelakassapa shows that he was permanently settled at the place. The *Pachittiya* contains an explicit mention of a permanent settlement of a Jaṭila named Ambatittha at Bhaddavāttika. Probably Isipattana (Ṛshipattana) acquired this name because it had several such settlements.[2]

The system of hermit life was quite old in the Brāhmaṇa society. In the Āraṇyaka literature of the pre-Buddhist period we find references to a class of Brāhmaṇas (and others also) who retired to forest and were known as Vānaprasthas. They studied the Vedic texts and performed sacrifices (actually, or by means of meditation). There is, however, no indication that they performed *tapas* also. Actually the victory of mendicancy over forest-dwelling in the Brāhmaṇical society was won quite late. In the *Mahābhārata* we find that forest colonies preponderate over the Parivrājakas.[3] According to Śaṅkarāchārya the hermits dwelling in the forests were distinguished by the practice of *tapas* or physical austerities, whereas the wandering mendicants were characterised by the practice of self-control, etc. According to G. C. Pande, however, the difference which prevailed between the two in earlier times consisted in the fact that the hermits continued to perform Vedic ritual while the mendicants gave it up. But this difference was important only for the Brāhmaṇical ascetics. Gradually in the Brāhmaṇa society itself

[1]Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[2]*Ibid.*, Ch. on Monasticism.
[3]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

Vānaprastha āśrama came to be regarded only as a preparation for Sannyāsa, and fell into disuse.

From the above account it is clear that by the age of the Buddha the Brāhmaṇical religion had long passed the phase when it was a simple religion of harmony between gods and men. Now a sharp contrast had developed between its *pravṛtti mārgī* (this-worldly), that is formalistic and ritualistic, form and the new esoteric and ascetic direction given to it in the Upanishads. In the Upanishads the doctrine of the efficacy of the ritual is often replaced by that of *jñāna* (knowledge), *dhyāna* (meditation) and devotion and the moral, rather than the ritual, part of action is emphasized. In the *Gītā* and some other portions of the *Mahābhārata* ritualism emerges as the second best in its struggle against the ideologies of renunciation, meditation and devotion. These changes led to the acceptance of *Moksha* as the *summum bonum* of life and was added to the doctrine of Trivarga. The scheme of the Chaturvarga or Purushārtha thus became complete, and the Vedic religion became truly a synthesis of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* ideals. This transformation found its social reflection in the formulation of the theory of the Four Stages of Life in the Dharmasūtras.[1]

Yaksha Worship and Other Popular Cults

A man's religious faith expresses itself in accordance with the bent of his mind. According to the *Gītā* the faith of each is shaped by his own mental constitution (*sattvānurūpa sarvasya śraddhā bhavati Bhārata*).[2] "Men of Sāttvika disposition worship the Devas; those of Rājasika disposition worship the Yakshas and Rākshasas and others of Tāmasika disposition worship Bhūtas and Pretas (spirits and ghosts)."[3] Another factor that determines the nature of religious faith is cultural environment of a people. In India with her bewildering cultural diversity belief in innumerable gods, semi-gods, spirits and demons peopling the air everywhere has always been, and still is, a characterstic feature of popular religion.[4] As remarked by Wheeler, in India "the crudest animism and demonism still underlie the semi-philosophical and ethical concepts of the educated

[1]*RHAI*, I, pp. 129-32.
[2]*Gītā*, XVII.3.
[3]*Ibid.*, XVII.4.
[4]Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 318.

few ... the symbols of the higher thought are the awesome physical realities of the peasantry."[1] In the age of the Buddha, as in any other age of Indian history, probably each clan or family was supposed to be guided and protected by some special god who was worshipped by its members.[2] Trees were generally regarded as abodes of spirits and gods. Sometimes a tree itself was identified with the god and worshipped. The *Vinaya* records a story of a god (*rukkhadevatā*) who requested a monk, who was felling its abode, the tree, not to do that.[3] The *Mahāvagga* refers to a god living on a kakudha tree. These gods and semi-gods were believed to be benevolent by nature. They tried to keep people on the right track if they cherished some undesirable notions.[4]

Often connected with trees were the Yakkhas and Yakkhīs (or Yakkhiṇīs) whose worship was widely prevalent. The term *Yakkha* was almost a popular synonym for *Devatā*.[5] According to Coomaraswamy Yaksha worship represented, at the popular level, a continuation of pre-Aryan religion.[6] The Yakshas granted worldly desires, progeny and wealth.[7] Usually they are said to have the character of local deities or patron saints, but sometimes they are described as malevolent. They even took possession of a man's person inducing in him sympotms of frenzy.[8] They usually lived on trees, in buildings and forests or at the cross roads.

The Yakkhīs or Yakkhiṇīs (Yakshiṇīs) sometimes appear to tempt men and resemble the Apsarās (*achchharā*). Apsarās were female spirits considered to be of great beauty and physical charm. Petas (*pretas*) and petanis (*pretanīs*) were probably spirits of dead persons haunting the air and the dreadful objects in the world. Sometimes they are said to have lived on the trees. The *Chullavagga* speaks of the Great Ocean (*mahāsamuddo*) being the abode of *timis, timiṅgalas, asuras, nāgas*, and *gandhabbas* and distinctly says that the *asuras* sport there. These beings are said to be of tremendous size amount-

[1]Wheeler, M., *The Indus Civilization*, p. 83.
[2]Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 43.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 44.
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]Coomaraswamy, A. K., *Yakṣas*, I, p. 36.
[6]*Ibid.*
[7]*Ibid.*
[8]*Ibid.*, pp. 21–2.

ing even to five yojanas.[1] The *piśāchas* were believed to be dreadful in form and figure and malevolent in nature. The *Mahāvagga* lays down that if at a certain place of rain-retreat the monk is troubled by the piśāchas, he could leave the place without any fear of a break in *Varshāvāsa*. The gandhabbas (*gandharvas*) were, however, spirits seeking the opportunity of rebirth.

Besides the deities mentioned above the people worshipped various animals such as elephants, horses, cows, dogs and crows.[2] The *Gītā* also refers to the popular worship of the manes, spirits (*bhūtas*), etc. and a large number of celestial, tree and animal gods.[3] "A vague and variable polytheism which merged imperceptibly into polydemonism constituted popular theology."[4]

Apart from these lowly gods and demons there were gods belonging to a higher rung of the ladder. The hierarchy of these gods given in the *Vinaya* is as follows: *bhummā devā, chatummahārājikā devā, tāvatiṁsā devā, yāmā devā, tusitā devā, nimmānaratī devā, paranimmittavasavattī devā*, and *brahmakāyikā devā*.[5] *Bhummā devā* were the gods who inhabited the earth while the *chatummahārājikā devā* presided over the four quarters. The latter attended on the Buddha. An illustrious light emanated from their bodies due to which they looked like masses of fire. *Yāmā devā* acted in the night and *tusitā devā* lived in the *tusita* heaven. The *Mahāvagga* refers to *antarahitā devatā* who, according to G. S. P. Mishra, appears to be personification of one's intuition.[6] The *Vinaya* also presents Māra as a wicked god who like Kāma of the Hindu pantheon leads the saintly people away from the right path. According to Basak[7] the conquest of the Buddha over Māra signifies the withdrawal of all desires. Māra was a personification of psycho-physical difficulties and conflicts that the seeker of the Truth had to face in his way to the attainment of the cherished goal. His army (*mārasenā*) may therefore be taken to comprise various undesirable instincts, ideas and feelings that haunt the mind of a seeker of Truth.[8]

[1] Mishra, *op. cit.*

[2] Law, B. C., *India as Described in the Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, pp. 195, 197–8.

[3] *Gītā*, IX.25; X. 21–38.

[4] Pande, *Origins*, p. 319.

[5] Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[7] Basak, R. G., *Lectures on Buddha and Buddhism*, p. 55.

[8] Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

Brahmā and Sakka are two other important gods mentioned in the early Buddhist texts. Brahmā was different from the impersonal Brahman of the Upanishads. He seems to be the deity in charge of the good interests of the human beings and other creatures for, when the Buddha thought not to preach the *dhamma* to the worldly people, Brahmā descended on the earth from Brahmaloka to persuade the Buddha to propagate the religion.

The god Sakka is referred to as '*Sakko devānāmindo*' which shows that he was considered the highest among the gods. It is interesting to note that the Vedic term Śakra (Pali Sakka) which was merely an epithet of Indra was converted into a proper name and the proper name, Indra (Pali Inda) itself was reduced to an epithet.[1] He appears like 'a great mass of fire' (*mahā aggikkhandho*) on account of the light that issues from his body. According to some the "Buddhist Sakka is a development of the Vedic god Indra with an emphasis on the moral side of his nature."[2] But Sakka was not a deity separate from Indra; he was the same. There is also nothing specifically ethical in the Buddhist Sakka as an advancement on what we find in the Vedic Indra.[3]

Because of the wide popularity of the doctrine of karman,[4] the belief in the existence of an intermediate life where the soul of the dead person is taken to enjoy or suffer the fruits of his deeds on the earth was widely prevalent and played an important role in popular eschatology. We meet a vivid picture of hell both in the Buddhist and Jaina literatures, though such a picture is lacking in the earlier Vedic texts. While hell was a place for punishment and unbearable torture, heaven was a place where the person was attended by all the pleasureable sensual objects. The Buddha narrated to his lay-devotees *sagga kathās* (stories of heaven) to induce them to act righteously.

Mahas or popular festivals were held in honour of "Indra or Skanda or Rudra, or Mukunda, or demons, or yakṣas or the snakes, or ... in honour of a tomb or a shrine, or a tree, or a hill, or a cave, or a well, or a tank, or a pond, or a river, or a lake, or a sea,

[1]Cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 338.
[2]*University of Ceylon Review*, III, No. 1, April 1945, p. 40.
[3]Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
[4]Pande, *Origins*, p. 321.

or a mine."[1] On such occasions Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas, guests, as well as paupers and beggars were entertained with food and gifts. Mixed company and liquor and rough crowd were then not unknown. Pande compares them with the '*Samajjā*' which is referred to in Buddhist literature and which, originally at least, had a cult-significance.[2]

[1]Cf. Agrawala, V. S., *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Loka Dharma*, Varanasi, 1964; Jain, J. C., *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in the Jaina Canon*, p. 215 ff.

[2]Pande, *Origins*, pp. 319–20.

Part 2

THE TRIRATNA

Chapter 4

THE BUDDHA : FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

In the preceding three Chapters we have outlined the religious and material background of the society in which Buddhism originated. It however. remains to be seen how the thought-currents of the age of the Buddha moulded his thought and personality. This enquiry we propose to undertake in this Chapter. Here we shall confine ourself to an investigation into the impact of the religious atmosphere on the teachings of the Buddha ; other problems such as the influence of the contemporary constitutions of tribal republics on his ideas on the organisation of his monastic order will be taken up at more appropriate places.

Buddha and the Vedas and Upanishads

The Vedic religion in the 6th century B.C. had two main branches : ritualistic and non-ritualistic. The early Buddhist texts more than once represent the Buddha as disputing with the learned Brāhmaṇas who were representatives of the former. The topics were mainly caste, sacrifice[1] and the authority of the Vedas. The Buddhist opposition on these subjects has always been clear. Buddha also emphatically repudiated every kind of external worship. In some of the *suttas* he ridicules the worship of the Vedic deities. In the *Tevijja sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* he ridicules the attempts of the Brāhmaṇas to invoke Indra, Īśāna, Prajāpati, Brahmā, Yama, etc. He mocks at the idea of reaping fruits and rewards through propitiating the gods.

As regards the Upanishads, the Buddhist texts are silent about them. However, from very old times the view has been prevalent that there are deep affinities between the Upanishadic and the Buddhist doctrines. Gauḍapāda held the view that the main ideas of the Upanishads agreed with those of the Buddha. Many other ancient thinkers held the same opinion.[2] Max Müller, Bloomfield,

[1]Cf. Horner, I.B., 'Early Buddhism and the Ṭaking of Life', *B.C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 436–55.

[2]Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

T.W. Rhys Davids, C.A.F. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg have adhered to the view that the Buddha was deeply influenced by the teachings of the Upanishads Keith regards the Buddha as an agnostic but even he compares the Buddhist concept of Nirvāṇa with the Upanishadic Absolute.[1] B. M. Barua has made an attempt to trace the Upanishadic sources of Buddha's ideas at great length.[2] But whether or not the Buddha had deep knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads is not certain. Nor is there any record of any discussion between him and any spokesman of the Upanishadic wisdom. He, however, must have had some acquaintance with the fundamental theme of the Upanishadic thought. There is a similarity between the ridiculing attitude of the Buddha and of the Upanishads towards the Vedas and in their view that moral endeavour, contemplation and meditation are more exalted than Vedic ritualism. However, disapproval of sacrifices in Buddhism was more pronounced and condemnatory. It is true that in some of the Upanishads we find mild denunciation of the cult of sacrifice and that in some Upanishads attempts have been made to allegorize and spiritualize the sacrificial rituals, but they (the Upanishads) accept the validity of Vedic ritualism as a path to the lower realm of pitṛyāna. Thus the Vedic *karmakāṇḍa* received at least a subordinate place in the scheme of the Upanishadic religion. In Buddha's teachings, it did not.

Whether or not the Buddha was influenced by the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman is a debatable question.[3] According to Radhakrishnan[4] the Upanishadic Brahman is called by the Buddha as Dharma "to indicate its essentially ethical value for us on the empiric plane." But according to the Buddha, Dharma is the moral norm and never a supreme primordial reality. According to W. S. Urquhart[5] without stating his attitude the Buddha "implicitly admitted an ultimate reality." According to G. C. Pande it is true that nowhere is the Buddha seen criticizing the *Ātmavāda* or *Brahmavāda* of the Upnishads; even in later times a Buddhist critique

[1]Keith, 'Pre-canonical Buddhism', *IHQ*, XII, No. I, pp. 1-20.

[2]Cf. also Upadhyaya, K.N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagvadgītā*, pp. 90–105. Upadhyaya gives a long list of similar ideas and expressions found in the Upanishads and early Buddhist texts.

[3]Cf. Pratap Chandra, 'Was Early Buddhism Influenced by Upanishads?', *Philosophy: East and West*, 1971.

[4]*Gautama Buddha*, p. 49.

[5]*Vedānta and Modern Thought*, 1928, p. 94.

of Vedānta is rare. "Now the roots of Śaṅkara's Absolutism go back to the Upanishads, while those of Buddhist Absolutism can be traced to the Nikāyas." If we suppose, G. C. Pande suggests, "that the Nikāyas were themselves influenced by the Upaniṣads, it will render clear the nearness of latter-day Vedānta and Buddhism... it appears that early Buddhism was fundamentally influenced by the Upaniṣads which gave to it its early tendencies towards Idealism and Absolutism. These tendencies, it may be noted, could not have been derived from the Śramaṇic thought-world."[1]

The early Vedic attitude towards life and its problems was one of hope and optimism. But with the Upanishads pessimism makes its appearance. The phenomena of the world came to be regarded as full of sorrow. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad* we find reference to the prevalence of cosmic misery—*lokadukkha.* However, while the Upanishads approve a life of meditation and contemplation of the great truths, they do not emphasize withdrawal from the mundane pursuits of a householder's life. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the stress on the renunciation of all ties of the home-life is dominant. According to Jacobi[2] the germs of the monastic movement which began in the days of the Upanishads assumed tremendous proportions under the leadership of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. He therefore concludes that the originals of the monastic orders of the Jainas and Buddhists were the Brāhmaṇical ascetics from whom "they borrowed many important practices and institutions of ascetic life." This observation is not entirely new. Max Müller,[3] Bühler and Kern were also of the same opinion.[4] We have already criticized this theory in detail.

The ultimate spiritual destiny of man, according to the Upanishads, is a positive state of being, consciousness and blissfulness (*sachchidānanda*). Even ladies like Maitreyī hankered after immortality and refused to be satisfied with mundane prosperity. Against this Buddhism put the concept of nirvāṇa as the *summum bonum* of life. Whether or not this concept was influenced by the Upanishadic notion of Brahman, is a controversial question. Buddha did not engage himself in an abstruse psychological and metaphysical examination of the bases of the Upanishadic teachings. He

[1]Pande, *Origins*, p. 556.
[2]*Jaina Sūtras, SBE,* XXII, pp. xxiv-xxv.
[3]*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 351.
[4]*Manual of Indian Buddhism.*

adopted a pragmatic attitude and was content with describing such questions as *avyākṛta*, as examples of empty and futile intellectual jugglery.

Sāṅkhya System

Sāṅkhya philosophy enjoys a very reputable position in Indian philosophical thought and the *Bhagvadgītā* calls its legendary founder Kapila a perfect sage. As its name suggests, Sāṅkhya pursues an analytical methodology based on numerical classification. The classical Sāṅkhya admits two ultimate realities namely purusha and prakṛti which are independent of each other. The purusha or the self is an intelligent principle quite distinct from the body. Consciousness (*chaitanya*) is not an attribute but the very essence of purusha. Physical things exist for its enjoyment. There are innumerable selves or purushas related to different bodies. Prakṛti is the ultimate cause of the world. It is an eternal unconscious principle (*jaḍa*). It is always changing and has no other end than the satisfaction of selves. In the words of B.N. Seal it is "an undifferentiated manifold, an indeterminate infinite continuum of infinitesimal Reals."[1] In his commentary on the *Shaḍdarśanasamuchchaya* called the *Tarkarahasyadīpikā*, Guṇaratna (14th cent. A.D.) says that there are two schools of Sāṅkhya : (i) that which maintains that there are different *pradhānas* (*prakṛtis*) for each *purusha* and (ii) that which believes in the existence of only one eternal *pradhāna* (Maulikya) Sāṅkhya).[2] Sattva, rajas and tamas are three guṇas or constituents (not qualities or attributes) of Prakṛti which holds them together in a state of equilibrium (*sāmyāvasthā*). *Sattva* is of the nature of illuminating light, *rajas* produces action and energy and *tamas* is an obstructing element According to the *Sāṅkhyakārika*, sattva is of the type of light (*prakāśa*), rajas is the source of motion (*pravṛtti*) and tamas has the character of being heavy and producing impediments (*niyama*). The existence of guṇas is inferred from the qualities of pleasure, pain and indifference which we find in all things. The world evolves out of prakṛti when purushas come into association (*saṁyoga*) with prakṛti or pradhāna. From prakṛti are evolved in turn *mahat* (the great one), *buddhi* (intellect) and *ahaṁkāra*, the function of which is *abhimāna* owing to which self considers itself to be an agent (*kartā*) which it really is not. From *ahaṁkāra* arise five

[1]Seal, B. N., *Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus.*
[2]Quoted by Varma in *Early Buddhism and its Origins*, p. 298.

organs of knowledge (*jñānendriyas*) and from them five organs of action (*karmendriyas*) and mind (*manas*). With an increase of tamas *ahaṁkāra* produces five subtle elements (*tanmātras*) and from them arise five gross elements (*ākaśa*, air, fire, water and earth). Thus in Sāṅkhya we have altogether twenty-five principles. All of them except purusha are comprised by prakṛti which is the ultimate cause of everything including mind, matter and life. The purusha is neither the cause nor the effect of anything. In reality self is free and immortal yet because of *avidyā* or ignorance it confuses itself with body and mind. This is the cause of all our sorrows. Once we realize the distinction between self and not-self we attain *mukti* or *moksha*. As regards God, the main tendency in Sāṅkhya is to do away with theistic belief. Some Sāṅkhya philosophers, however, admit the existence of God as the supreme person who is the witness but not the creator of the world.

Thus in its classic form realistic dualism of Sāṅkhya is anti-Vedic in the sense that it tries to construct a system of evolution instead of accepting the existence of a creative agency as accepted in the form of Hiraṇyagarbha or Prajāpati in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas. But many scholars try to trace the origin of Sāṅkhya in the Vedas themselves.[1] As distinguished from the Buddhists, the Sāṅkhya accepted the validity of the Veda as a *pramāṇa* and has ever remained anxious to establish its Vedic origin (a claim which was seriously challenged by Śaṅkara). It has been argued that there is the germinal conception of Sāṅkhya in the *RV* itself where a reference is made to two birds who are associated together, are mutual friends and take refuge on the same tree ; one of them eats the sweet fig, the other abstains from food, and merely looks on.[2] According to Macdonell the conception of the origination of *sat* from *asat* as formulated in the *Nāsadīya sūkta* is the starting point of the natural philosophy which developed into the Sāṅkhya system.[3] According to Radhakrishnan there are hymns which stop with the two principles of purusha and prakṛti.[4] Some scholars trace the origin of Sāṅkhya in the later Vedic literature. The *Atharvaveda* (X.8.43) refers to three guṇas. Many Indian and European scholars trace the development of Sāṅkhya from the *Brāhmaṇas* or *Upanishads*. Johnston

[1]Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 299 f.
[2]*RV*, X. 125.
[3]*The Vedic Reader*, p. 207.
[4]*Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 102.

holds that Sāṅkhya is rooted in the speculations of the Brāhmaṇas.[1] B.M. Barua[2] traces the roots of Sāṅkhya dualism in *Praśnopanishad.* The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* says: *tamaso mā jyotirgamaya.* According to G.C. Pande however Sāṅkhya together with Yoga belonged to the Śramaṇa stream of thought. In the Upanishads there is an attempt to combine the ideas of Sāṅkhya with theistic ideas.[3] Here it may be recalled that the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* is very critical of Vedic sacrifices and calls them impure. It regards not sacrificial works but discriminative knowledge the true means to liberation.

Buddha and Sāṅkhya System

As regards the relationship of Sāṅhkya with Buddhism, attempts have often been made to read profound influence of the former on the latter. Jacobi maintained that Buddha could not have been free from Sāṅkhya influence. While taking so much from Yoga, he could not remain free of the influence of Sānkhya. Both Sāṅkhya and Buddhism set out with the same enquiry and, we are told, the explanation given of the genesis of *dukkha* is substantially the same in both.[4] It has also been suggested that it is possible to derive the doctrine of Pratītyasamutpāda from the theory of the evolution of tattvas in Sāṅkhya. According to Oldenberg, however, Sāṅkhya did not influence Buddhism directly, although indirect influence is undeniable.[5] But according to Pande, Sāṅkhyan influence on Buddhism has been too lightly assumed. It is undeniable that there are fundamental philosophical similarities between Sāṅkhya and Buddhism. Both refuse to subscribe to an impersonal absolute and both believe in the elimination of suffering which is the characteristic of worldly existence. Both also agree in regarding the psycho-physical complex as changeful and non-self. But there are radical dissimilarities between (a) the Sāṅkhya purushas and the Buddhist *anātman*, and (b) the Sāṅkhya isolation of the purushas and the Buddhist nirvāṇa. Further, Sāṅkhya doctrine of satkāryavāda and its corollary the eternal Prakṛti, are clearly opposed to the Buddhist ideas of Pratītyasamutpāda and impermanence. The idea that the world is changeful and full of misery was probably not a part of

[1]Quoted by Varma, p. 304.
[2]*A History of Pre-Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 234; see also Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 8.
[3]*Origins*, p. 547.
[4]Quoted in *Origins*, p. 549.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 550.

the Sāṅkhya philosophy in the sixth century B.C. Lastly, even if Sāṅkhya had developed as a philosophy prior to Buddhism the early Buddhists did not take much note of it. There are no references to the Sāṅkhya system by name in the Nikāyas. The *Brahmajālasutta* refers to a class of eternalists who held the soul and the world to be two distinct eternals. This is a basic 'Sāṅkhya' doctrine and is identified as such by Garbe but nothing is said about the other beliefs of these eternalists. According to Aśvaghosha, Arāḍa, one of the teachers of Buddha, believed in a philosophy which was essentially Sāṅkhyan, but it was strangely silent over the three guṇas. Further, the source of Aśvaghosha on this point is not known.[1] Therefore, it does not appear safe to hold that early Buddhism was influenced much by the Sāṅkhya philosophy.[2]

Yoga System

The roots of Yoga can be traced to the Indus Civilization.[3] In the *Ṛgveda* the word Yoga is used in various senses, viz. (a) accomplishing the unaccomplished, (b) yoking or harnessing, (c) relation or combination, etc. In the *Atharvaveda* the great immanental power of *prāṇa* is recognized.[4] The famous brahmachārī sūkta of this work is a classic eulogy in praise of the power of continence.[5] It lays great stress on the cultivation of the status of Urdhvaretas.[6] Another significant idea about Yoga referred to in the *Atharvaveda* is the mention of the 'eight chakras'. Chakra is a key concept in the later Indian philosophy and practices of Haṭhayoga. The realization of the transcendent bliss through philosophical and mystical contemplation is the central tenet of the Upanishads. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* inculcates restraint of the external working of mind and speech. The *Kaushītaki* refers to the *antara agnihotra* of Pratardana. The second Chapter of the *Śvetāśvatara* contains the psychology and techniques

[1]*Origins*, p. 547; Upadhyaya, K.N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagvadgītā*, p. 95.

[2]We have already discussed the relation of Buddhism with Jainism. Here it may only be reminded that many earlier scholars such as Lassen, Barth, Weber and R.C. Dutt regarded Jainism an offshoot of Buddhism. But this view was given up after Bühler and Jacobi showed that Jainism was distinct and separate from Buddhism. (See, Dutt, R.C., *Buddhism and Buddhist Civilization in India*, 1983, p. 77 ff.).

[3]Cf. *RHAI*, I, Ch. II. Also see, *ibid.*, p. 93 ff.

[4]Cf. 'Ṛgveda men Prāṇa Vidyā', *Kalyāṇa* (Yogāṅka).

[5]Cf. *RHAI*, I, Ch. V; *supra*, pp. 41–2.

[6]*Ibid.*

of Yoga. The *Maitrāyaṇī* refers to the *shaḍāṅga* (six limbs) of Yoga. Tarka or deliberative reasoning is included here as one of the elements of Yoga.

As a philosophy the Yoga system is closely allied with Sāṅkhya. Its founder was sage Patañjali, the author of the *Yogasūtra*. It accepts the epistemology and metaphysics of Sāṅkhya with twenty-five principles but also the existence of God. Hence sometimes it is called theistic (*seśvara*) Sāṅkhya as distinguished from the Sāṅkhya of Kapila which is generally regarded as atheistic (*nirīśvara*). It regards God as the highest object of contemplation. The special interest of this system lies in the practice of Yoga as a means for the attainment of *vivekajñāna* or discriminative knowledge which is regarded in Sāṅkhya as essential for liberation. According to it Yoga consists in *chittavṛttinirodha* (the cessation of all mental functions). There are five levels of mental functions (*chittabhūmi*), the last two of which are conducive to Yoga. There are two kinds of Yoga or samādhi namely *samprajñatā* (mind's perfect concentration on the object of contemplation) and *asamprajñatā* (complete cessation of all mental functions including the knowledge of the contemplated object). There are eight aṅgas (steps) in the practice of Yoga—*yama* (restraint), *niyama* (ethical culture), *āsana* (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of senses), *dhāraṇa* (attention), *dhyāna* (meditation) and *samādhi* (concentration).

Influence of Yoga on the Buddha

The influence of Yoga on the Buddha is regarded as certain. After leaving his home Gotama tried various methods for the search of truth and wisdom. He practised Yoga also. Ālāra Kālāma taught him the techniques leading to the realization of the realm of Nothingness. Uddaka Rāmaputta taught him a further stage of Yoga, the mystic process leading to the realm of neither-consciousness-nor-unconsciousness.[1] But Gotama was not satisfied with these techniques. Hence he fell back upon his own efforts. He is said to have practised concentration with held breath. The famous Aryan Eight-fold Way refers to *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. The early Buddhist scriptures refer to the four-fold dhyāna. Besides this a second scheme in early Buddhistic Yoga is that of the four *Brahmavihāras* or sublime occupations—love and kindness (*maitri*), compassion (*karuṇā*), cheerfulness (*muditā*) and impartiality (*upekshā*). According to Buddhism and Pātañjala

[1]Upadhyaya, K.N., *op. cit.*, p. 95 f.

Yoga system both, the final goal of effort is the attainment of *prajñā*. But despite this obvious influence of Yoga on early Buddhism, in the absence of a definite date for the *Yogasūtra*, it is difficult to determine the historical relation of Buddhism with Yoga.

Buddha and Jainism

Both Jainism and Buddhism were off-shoots of Śramaṇism, the rival of Brāhmaṇism.[1] Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta or Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, the last Tīrthaṅkara of the Jainas, inherited Pārśva's religion of four *jāmas* or 'restraints' (*chāujjāmo dhammo*), which he reformed into a religion of five *sikkhāpadas* or 'precepts' (*pañchasikhio dhammo*). He also introduced nudity for monks in place of the earlier practice in Pārśva's order of using inner and upper vestments.

According to N. Tatia the Buddha obviously had before him the religion of Pārśva, which he designated as *chātuyāma-saṁvara* and ascribed to Mahāvīra. The contents of the *chātuyāma-saṁvara* as mentioned by the Buddha differ radically from the traditional explanation found in the Jaina scriptures, according to which the *chāujjāmo dhammo* stood for the four great vows (*mahāvratas*), namely, desisting (*veramaṇa*) from all kinds of injury to living beings (*savvāo pāṇāivāyāo*), all kinds of false speech (*savvāo musā-vāyāo*), all kinds of appropriation of things not offered (*savvāo adiṇṇādāṇāo*), and all kinds of appropriation of external things (*savvāo bahiddhādāṇāo*). The Buddha however explained the *chātuyāma-saṁvara* of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta as (i) observing of all kinds of restraints (*sabba-vāri-vārito*), (ii) keeping all kinds of restraints (*sabba-vāri-yuto*), (iii) being purified by all kinds of restraints (*sabba-vāri-dhuto*), and (iv) realizing all kinds of restraints (*sabba-vāri-phuṭo*). The first of these appears to refer to the stoppage of the *āsrava* (inflow of *karma*), the second to the state of *saṁvara* (restraint of *karma*), the third to *nirjarā* (dissociation of *karma*) and the fourth to the state of *moksha* (emancipation). Thus, the *chātuyāma-saṁvara*, mentioned in the Pāli texts, most probably refers to the fundamental principles of Jaina ethics, namely, *āsrava*, *saṁvara*, *nirjarā* and *moksha*. The Buddha probably was not conversant with the *sikkhāpadas* of Mahāvīra.[2]

Being the products of the same intellectual atmosphere, the teach-

[1]See, *supra*, p. 101, n. 2.

[2]Tatia, N., 'The Interaction of Jainism and Buddhism and its Impact on the History of Buddhist Monasticism', *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A.K. Narain, Delhi, 1980, p. 321.

ings of the Buddha and Mahāvīra naturally use similar expressions and display some common features.[1] The belief in the past and future Enlightened ones, idea of the impermanence of the worldly pleasures, undesirability of *saṁsāra*, rejection of the authority of the Vedas and of the efficacy of the Brāhmaṇical rituals were common grounds between them. A pessimistic attitude towards life and world was shared alike by both. Both of them also subscribed to the doctrines of Saṁsāravāda and Kriyāvāda. Further, both emphasized the superiority of the ascetic over the householder, but attached 'due importance to moral and disciplined lay life as a preparatory or initial stage for liberation.' Jainism is a frankly atheistic creed recognising no Supreme or Universal Soul over and above the individual jīvas and an atheistic strain is implicit in the Buddhist practical morality also. At least both of them deny the existence of an intelligent first cause. According to G. C. Pande "disbelief in a creator and controller of the world-process may be called a characteristic trait of Śramaṇa thought."[2] Further, both adored deified saints, possessed a clergy practising celibacy and emphasized non-violence.

Because of these striking similarities it was argued by some earlier writers that the two religions were actually one and that Jainism was an off-shoot of Buddhism. According to Barth there is such a great similarity between the Buddha and Mahāvīra that we are instinctively led to conclude that 'one and the same person' is intended. Further, according to him the similarities in the doctrines and history of their religions prove that one of two religions is a sect of the other.[3] But scholars like Colebrooke, Jacobi, Bühler, Guerinot, etc. have conclusively proved that the two religions were different from each other. It is true that for many years the Buddha and Mahāvīra were contemporaries but there is no doubt that they were different persons. Further, despite above similarities their religions show remarkable individualities, enjoyed patronage of separate kings and were never confused as one by the Brāhmaṇical authors.[4] Emerging as distinct creeds in the sixth century B.C. they drifted farther apart in the subsequent periods. In contrast with the Buddha's Middle Way which took asceticism in the sense of self-discipline, the Jaina doctrine attaches greater importance to ascetic practices. The austere

[1]Pande, G.C., *Origins*, p. 542.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 543.
[3]Barth, *The Religions of India*, pp. 148–50.
[4]See, Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 291.

discipline of mortifying the flesh, decried by Buddhism, acquires great importance in Jainism. Monastic disciplines of the two religions also show some important differences.[1] The divergence between the Jaina and Buddhist outlooks is reflected in many other aspects of these religions. Thus, while Buddhism advocates the *anatta* (no-soul) theory (at least according to the traditional schools), belief in the existence of innumerable souls is one of the basic doctrines of Jaina philosophy. It credits even inanimate objects like stones, trees, mountains, etc., with souls of varying degrees of consciousness. Again, with respect to the world (*loka*), the Buddhists held that we could neither speak of its eternity, nor of its annihilation, while the Jainas subscribed to the realistic view of the material world. Secondly, the Buddhist Nirvāṇa is defined as escape from existence while Jaina salvation assumes continued existence of disembodied soul in the state of perfection and bliss. The omniscience of the Kevalin has always been an important dogma with the Jainas. The Buddhists did not concede such a claim. Thirdly, the Jaina theory of *karman* is materialistic while the Buddhists regard karman as an immaterial psychological principle. The Buddhists stress the active aspect of karman as doing; the Jainas emphasize its mechanical aspect that comes forward in the karmaphala. The ideas about matter also differ considerably in the two religions and the emphasis on non-violence and non accumulation are not carried to the same extreme extent in Buddhism as in Jainism. The Buddhists regarded *ahiṁsā* as positive mental attitude of *mettā* and *karuṇā* while the Jainas emphasized its negative aspect. Further, the Buddha denounced nudity, so strongly emphasized by Mahāvīra, and asked his followers to keep themselves 'properly clad'. These differences gave rise to a state of considerable rivalry and opposition between the adherents of the two religions.

Buddha and Bhakti Cult

According to R. G. Bhandarkar "The tide of free speculation culminated in the east into such systems as those of Buddhism and Jainism. In the west, however, a theistic system with a god who had come to dwell among men arose."[2] "It appears that the idea of a religion of devotion arose in earlier times" though "it received a

[1]Cf. Mishra, G.S.P., 'Some Reflections on Early Jain and Buddhist Monachism', *Jijñāsā*, Jaipur, I, Nos. 3–4, p. 4–15.

[2]Bhandarkar, *Collective Works*, IV, p. 3.

definite shape when Vāsudeva revealed the *Gītā* to Arjuna."[1] In view of the antiquity of Bhakti and some similarities between Bhāgavatism and early Buddhism some scholars have postulated the influence of the former on the latter. For example, Senart[2] argues that the fact that the same epithet 'Bhagavat' is used both for Kṛshṇa and the Buddha shows that the latter is recast in the mould of the former. Further, he refers to the legends of marvel ascribed alike both to Purushottama Kṛshṇa and Mahāpurusha Buddha and points out to the similarity between the Bhāgavata doctrine of *avatāra* and the Buddhist tradition of the successive Buddhas descending at intervals from heaven to instruct the people on earth. Senart even finds devotionalism of the *Gītā* in the various Buddha stories and points out to common elements in the two, such as *jñāna*, *yoga*, *samādhi*, Nirvāṇa (mentioned as Brahmanirvāṇa in the *Gītā*), etc. On the basis of these similarities he concludes that "Buddhism is undoubtedly the borrower."[3]

But none of the arguments of Senart proves his point. The term 'Bhagavat' was a commonly used epithet for any divinity or venerable person. The life-histories of the Buddha and Kṛshṇa do not show any similarities and even myths about them radically differ. The concepts of love for the Buddha and unqualified surrender to Vāsudeva differ fundamentally. In fact it is not possible to derive the religion of renunciation, as the early Buddhism was, from the theistic religion of the *Gītā*. In the Nikāyas there is no mention of Vishṇu or Kṛshṇa as the supreme deity. The only form of theism, which the older portions of the Nikāyas seem to be familiar with, is the idea of Mahābrahmā as creator. Further, neither the Nikāyas are acquainted with the *Bhagavadgītā* and, nor is the *Gītā* acquainted with them. We therefore feel that Prof. G. C. Pande is right when he concludes that Buddhism and Bhakti were "alternative developments of a common basic tendency, viz., anti-ritualistic free speculation."[4]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[2] *IHQ*, VI, pp. 669–73
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Origins*, p. 557, n. 94.

Chapter 5

LIFE OF GOTAMA THE BUDDHA

Siddhārta Gotama

The followers of Buddha trace the roots of his teachings in the profound super-normal (*uttarimanussa*) realization of their great prophet. It is only natural for the adherents of a religion to credit the founder of their faith with powers of insight and penetration into the nature of truth and reality. But Hegel has familiarized us with the notion that great men are only the spokesmen of the 'ideas' of their age and that nebulous ideas of the day find their crystallization in a great man. According to this view it will not be an exaggeration even to maintain that the notion and criterion of what constitutes an element of originality in our thought is itself socially conditioned. The pursuit of this method is obviously essential in the interest of higher knowledge, but it should not imply the minimization of the genius of the great founders of religions. For example in the case of the Buddha himself it would be a travesty of truth to attribute his pessimistic world-view to economic depression or political tyranny of his times. He was born as a prince and was brought up in luxury, ease and comfort. Therefore the renunciation of the world by him and his *dukkhavāda* cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be set down to the motive of escapism.[1]

A complete biography of the Buddha is not found in the Pali canon.[2] However, there are incidental references in the Nikāyas[3]

[1]Mookerjee, Satkari, *CHI*, I, p. 589.

[2]Cf. Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 43. As the historicity of the Buddha is now fully established we are not discussing the views of those early scholars (such as R. Otto Franke, E. Senart and A. Barth) who doubted or rejected outright his historicity. For recent studies in the life-history of the Buddha see, Despande, P. Y., *Tathāgata Buddha*, New Delhi, 1984; Dhammaratna Thera, B., and Wijayasundara, Senarat, *Life of Gotama the Buddha*, Singapore, 1984.

[3]Pande, *Origins*, p. 370.

which shed some light on his personality and the events of his life.[1] An early form of the Sanskrit tradition is found in the collection of legends in the Tibetan scriptures, especially the *Vinaya*.[2] The *Mahāvastu*, belonging to the *Vinaya* of the Lokottaravādins, contains much legendary material for Buddha's biography. Its *Rāhulavatthu* account is important for his early life. The *Lalitavistara*, in its present form, is a Mahāyāna sūtra, but contains some clearly old passages.[3] It gives a continuous narrative of Buddha's life. And finally, the *Abhinishkramaṇasūtra*, existing only in a Chinese translation and the *Buddhacharita* of Aśvaghosha may be mentioned.[4]

It seems that for the earlier disciples of the Buddha it was the doctrine which was the centre of interest, and not the teacher.[5] Therefore certain evidence for Buddha's life is small; only its leading events and features can be historically delineated after removing the later legendary accretions, which we propose to do in the following pages.

Gautama Buddha, it is said in legends, came down to this world from the Tushita heaven where he was the presiding god. Before his advent into the world, he indicated the time, place and family which would suit him best for appearing as a human being. He was born in 563 B.C.,[6] for his parinirvāṇa is now usually placed in 483 B.C. and he was eighty years old at that time. The place of his birth was Kapilavastu, the chief city of the Śākyas. It was situated probably near the place where the Lumbinī edict of Aśoka has been found.

The Śākyas are described as proud Khattiyas of pure decent. But at the same time the Brāhmaṇa gotra of Gautama is ascribed to them and the tradition of close inter-marriages is associated with them

[1] The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta, sutta 26, Mahāsachchakasutta, sutta 85, Bodhirājakumārasutta, sutta 100* and *Saṅgāravasutta* are important for the history of his exertions towards the attainment of truth.

[2] Cf. Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha.*

[3] Pande, *Origins*, p. 370.

[4] Published in an abridged trans. by Beal as *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha.*

[5] Warder, *op. cit.*

[6] Vide Goyal, S. R., *Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya*, pp. 148–52 for a detailed study of the various theories regarding the date of the parinirvāṇa. Cf. also Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, 1971, pp. 31–38.

which indicates some non-Aryan affinities. They were an oligarchical clan with a popular assembly and elected chief. Their economic life, rural and agricultural in nature, was simple. Against this background the story of Buddha having in his early life three different palaces for the three seasons does not appear very plausible.[1] From the *Mahāvagga* the name of his father appears to have been Śuddhodana and that of his mother Māyā or Mahāmāya ; his own name was Siddhārtha. According to the *Chullavagga* the mother of the Buddha died soon after his birth and he was brought up by Mahāprajāpati Gotamī, who is described as the mother's sister (*mātuchchha*) of the Buddha in later legends. She is mentioned at several places in the *Vinaya* and the Nikāyas, but her relationship with the Buddha is not explicitly specified in the latter.[2] According to a legend Ṛshi Asita, who learnt of the birth of the Great Being by his divine insight, came to Kapilvastu and prophesied that the child would either become a sovereign ruler or a recluse, a Tathāgata, a Samyaksambuddha. But the prophecy of Asita has little claim to be regarded as authentic.[3] On Buddha's education and the name of his wife[4] the earliest records are silent. Rāhula figures as a monk at several places in the Nikāyas, but is not called Buddha's son. Only in the *Mahāvagga* a person of that name is sent by his mother to the Buddha to ask for his *dāyajja*; but here the name of *Rāhulamātā* is missing.

At the age of twenty-nine the Buddha entered the homeless state. In the traditions it takes the form of highly pathos-ridden story which asserts that the crisis was caused by the first sight of old age, sickness, death and of an ascetic. But as G. C. Pande points out, it seems difficult to believe that the Siddhārtha could have lived for twenty-eight years without encountering sickness, old age, death and asceticism.[5] The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* claims to record that he put on the yellow robes and went forth from his home to the homeless state against the wishes of his weeping parents. A sutta in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* informs us how through reflection over the subjects of old age, sickness and death he lost all pride of youth, health and life. Thus, though the precise circumstances under which the actual *abhinishkramaṇa* took place

[1]Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 372.
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 373.
[4]Variously called Yaśodharā, Gopā, Biṁbā and Bhadda Kañchanā.
[5]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

are no longer known yet there seems no reason to believe that it was a sudden revolution.[1]

The *abhinishkramaṇa* was followed by several years of wandering and seeking. He was invited by two Brāhmaṇa female hermits and then by Raivata Brahmarshi and Rajaka Tridaṇḍika to stay in their hermitages, which he politely refused.[2] The names of only two teachers, Ārāḍa or Ālāra Kālāma and Rudraka Rāmaputra or Uddaka Rāmaputta, under whom the Buddha sought spiritual instruction, are mentioned in the Nikāyas. On enquiry he learnt that Ārāḍa Kālāma had reached the seventh stage of meditation (*samāpatti*) called *akiñchaññāyatana* (in which one's mind seeks nothing) while Rudraka Rāmaputra could rise to the eighth stage of meditation called *n'evasaññānāsaññāyatana* (in which the sense perception was neither active nor dead).[3]

Enlightenment

From there Gautama went to Gayāśirsha Hill and found there many ascetics given to rigorous practices of self-mortification for spiritual elevation but he observed that they had not freed themselves wholly from worldly attachments and were far away from obtaining true insight and knowledge. Now he went to Uruvelā senānī-gāma on the bank of the river Nerañjanā. There he practised rigorous asceticism for six long years and realized that it would not lead to perfect knowledge. Thereupon he decided to change his line of practices by taking food which he began with *khira* of Sujātā (the daughter of a local senānī) who offered it to him thinking that he was a tree-god. It disappointed his five Brāhmaṇa ascetic-companions (the Pañchavargīya monks named Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assaji) who left him in disgust. Now Gautama took his seat under the Bodhi tree with the determination that even if his body dries up he would not leave his seat without attaining sambodhi. Māra tried to break his resolution but did not succeed. He gradually rose from the first to the fourth *jhāna* and visualised the Highest Truth, the Sambodhi, and thereby became fully Enlightened, the Buddha, Samyaksambuddha or Prabuddha. According to some

[1]*Ibid.*, p. 376.

[2]Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 87. The reference to Brāhmaṇa female hermits is interesting and significant.

[3]For the view that the Buddha had been a Jaina Muni before Enlightenment, see Jain, B. Bhagchandra, 'The Buddha and Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 1–2, pp. 18–20.

scholars the tradition of Buddha's attaining Enlightenment under the 'Bodhi tree' is just a piece of popular legend. According to Thomas 'the whole story of the contest with Māra is a mythological development.'[1] Rhys Davids has seen in the Māra story 'a subjective reality'.[2] But according to G. C. Pande, the struggle with Māra was 'really a psychological struggle with secular temptations'.[3]

After obtaining Enlightenment the Buddha remained for some time[4] at the Bodhi tree enjoying Vimuttisukha. After this the *Mahāvagga* narrates the acceptance of Tapussa and Bhallika as lay-disciples, which is followed by the description of Buddha's hesitation to preach[5] (because the truth visualised by him was too deep and subtle to be comprehended by men of average intellect) and his final decision to engage in preaching at the entreaty of Brahmā (*Brahmayāchanā*). He resolved to preach the Dhamma first to his former five Brāhmaṇa ascetic companions then dwelling at Isipattana or Sarnāth, the deer-park near Banaras. With this began his career as a missionary, usually called setting into motion the Wheel of Law (*Dhammachakka pavattana*).[6]

Missionary Life

A systematic description of the traditional account of Buddha's missionary activities, extending from his thirty-fifth year to the end of his life, has been given by Kern, Thomas, N. Dutt etc. The tradition, however, is for the greater part post-canonical and much of it is uncertain in the absence of earlier evidence. As noted above, his missionary activity commenced at Sarnath where he imparted his teachings to his former companions, the five Brāhmaṇas. Very probably at Sarnath Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, Nālaka and Sabhiya, who were all recluses, also expressed appreciation of Buddha's teachings though they joined the *saṅgha* a litter later, in the first or second year of Buddha's ministry. After this point no continuous narrrative of Buddha's activities is found in the Nikāyas though the *Vinaya* describes the conversion of Yaśa and his friends, the sending

[1]Thomas, *Life*, p. 74.
[2]Quoted by Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 381.
[3]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 381.
[4]Variously mentioned as one, four or seven weeks.
[5]*Origins*, p. 383.
[6]For an interesting study of 'Some of the Common Features in the Life-stories of the Buddha and Mahāvīra' see Malvania, Dalsukh D., *POC*, Gauhati Session, 1966, pp. 149-53.

forth of the first missionaries, the conversion of Kassapa (the leader of the Jaṭilas) and his disciples at Gayāśīrsha, the delivery of the Fire Sermon, the conversion of King Bimbisāra at Rājagṛha and the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggalāna. Ajātasattu, the son of Bimbisāra, does not appear to have been favourably disposed towards the Buddha at first. Towards the end of Buddha's life, however, he is said to have had a change of heart as a result of listening to the Sāmaññaphala-sermon. Among the Brāhmaṇas of Magadha the Buddha does not seem to have been very successful though among his lay-devotees of this region were included a number of gāmaṇīs, seṭṭhīs, gahapatis, princes and princesses.

There is some evidence to show that the Śākyas were also not at first favourably disposed towards his teachings. The ordination of Rāhula is, however, mentioned in the *Vinaya*, though the tradition regarding the conversion of Śuddhodana and the mother of Rāhula is of later date.[1] Some youths of prominent Śākyan families also became his disciples and joined the order. Among them were included Ānanda, Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Kimbila, Nanda and Devadatta. Chaṇḍaka and Upāli followed the Śākyan nobles and joined the order of monks. Ānanda was the son of Amitodana, a brother of king Śuddhodana. Nanda was a step-brother of the Buddha. Devadatta was the cousin of the Buddha and the brother of Yaśodharā. Upāli, who became the repository of Vinaya rules, belonged to a barber family. Chaṇḍaka had been the attendant and charioteer of prince Siddhārtha.

In the fifth year of his ministry at the request of Mahāprajāpati and the intervention and persuasion of Ānanda, the Buddha approved the formation of the order of nuns, provided they agreed to the eight disabilities imposed by him (*infra*, section on Buddha's attitude to women).

King Pasenadi and queen Mallikā of Kosala are depicted in the Nikāyas as admirers of the Buddha. Princesses Somā, Sakulā and Sumanā too figure as interested in Buddhist doctrines. From the seṭṭhī class of Kosala the two most important names are those of Anāthapiṇḍika and Viśākhā—the daughter-in-law of Migāra (though called Migāramātā). The former is reported to have made the gift of the Jetavana vihāra and the latter of the Pubārāma Migāramātupāsāda.[2] Among the rich and influential Brāhmaṇas of this region

[1]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 389.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 388.

who accepted the new faith the names of Jānussoṇi, Aggika Bhāradvāja, Dhānañjani, Pokkharasādi, Lohichcha and Chaṅkī may be mentioned. The most notable converts from among the Ājīvikas of Kosala were Vekhanassa and Poṭṭhapāda.[1]

Just as Sāvatthī was the 'headquarter' of the Ājīvikas, so was Vesālī or Vaiśālī of the Nigaṇṭhas. The most important success of the Buddha here was the conversion of the Nigaṇṭha upāsaka Sīha (Siṁha)—a Lichchhavi general. From among the Bhaggas of Suṁsumāragiri came the three distinguished lay-adherents—the parents of Nakula, and Bodhirājakumāra.[2] The two most well-known converts from among the Mallas were Dabba Mallaputta and Chuṅda Kammāraputta. In Aṅga the Buddha is reported to have disputed with the Brāhmaṇa teacher Soṇadaṇḍa of Champā. Some discourses of the Buddha have been placed at Kosāmbī, Verañjā and the Kuru villages Kammāsadhamma and Thulla-koṭṭhita.

Among the prominent personalities who accepted the faith of the Buddha the following also deserve mention : Mahākātyāyana (son of the royal priest of king Pradyota of Avanti), Mahānāma (the rich Śākyan relative of the Teacher), Ambapāli (a courtezan), Jyotishka (son of a fabulously rich banker of Rājagṛha), Jīvaka (a very renowned physician), Abhayarājakumāra (a son of king Bimbisāra), Śroṇa Koṭiviśa (son of a very rich banker of Champā), Nyagrodha (a distinguished Paribbājaka), Upāli (a gahapati of Nālandā), Pukkusāti (king of Takshaśilā), Kūṭadanta (a learned Brāhmaṇa), Pañchaśikha (a gandharva), Nandamātā (a distinguished lady), Keniya and Sela (two Jaṭila ascetics), Aṅgulimāla (a dacoit-son of the priest of king Prasenajit), Mahāli (a prominent Lichchhavi), Sachchaka (a teacher of the Lichchhavis), Jānussoṇi (a rich and distinguished Brāhmaṇa teacher), Vakkali (a celebrated Brāhmaṇa of Śrāvastī), Bāvarī (the royal priest of the king of Kosala), Sunakkhatta (a Lichchhavi prince of Vaiśālī), Subhūti (a nephew of Anāthapiṇḍika), Mahakoṭṭhita (a learned Brāhmaṇa), Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja (a son of the priest of king Udayana), Khemā (a queen of Bimbisāra) and Sāmāvatī (the daughter of a seṭṭhi).[3] From this list it is apparent that geographically the sphere of Buddha's activities embraced mainly the kingdoms Kosala and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 389.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] For details, vide Dutt, N., *op. cit.*, p. 116 ff.

Magadha. Among the lay-disciples an important part seems to have been played by the moneyed and ruling classes. Women too figure prominently as nuns and lay-devotees. Many Brāhmaṇas also entered the new Order, and there were followers from the lower classes too. The *Saṅgha* or Order of Monks was open to the people of all castes and all could join it on a footing of equality, except for government servants, debtors, slaves, certain kinds of proclaimed criminal offenders and those suffering from certain incurable physical defects.[1]

Parinirvāṇa

After completing his work of propagating his teachings and organizing the monastic institution, the Buddha decided to enter the *parinirvāṇa.* At that time Chuṅda, a blacksmith of Pāvā invited him to a meal of rice, cakes and *sūkaramaddava*. Scholars differ about the meaning of the last word. It was either a boar's tender flesh or some edible herb. He ate it and fell ill. He breathed his last at Kusinārā or Kuśīnagara among the Mallas. His death took place at the age of 80 years on the full moon day of Vaiśākha as did his birth and awakening. The event was signified by an earthquake while Brahmā Sahampati and Sakka, the king of gods, expressed their sorrow by saying that all constituted beings and objects must have decay.[2] His remains were cremated with royal honours. A battle for the possession of his mortal remains for daily worship was stopped by Droṇa, a Brāhmaṇa. Eight stūpas were erected in different parts of India to house his relics.

[1]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 390 f.
[2]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Chapter 6

THE DHAMMA

It is not possible to determine exactly what were the actual utterances of the Buddha. Doubts have been raised about Buddhism of the *Tripiṭaka* being essentially the teachings of the Buddha and much discussion now centres round the question of his original doctrine.[1] For example, some historians believe that he did not repudiate the belief in *ātman* or soul; others maintain that he did. Some hold that his ideas 'differed but little from the teachings of he Upanishadic sages'; others suggest that he taught a radical departure from the philosophy of these texts. Some have opined that he believed in the doctrine of *saṁsāra* while others have advocated that he 'rejected the doctrine of transmigration and taught merely the almost self-evident truism that one generation is affected by the deeds of the preceding one'. Further, some scholars attribute to him extreme pragmatism ignoring all dogma, while others deny it. Modern scholars also differ on the exact meaning of the terms *dukkha*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *nibbāna*, etc. used in early Buddhism. Possibly there is some truth in the various views prevalent on the different aspects of the Dhamma, but it also appears that there is a considerable amount of subjective element in them and a definite conclusion will always remain difficult to be reached.

The Buddhist Canon

Buddhist literature containing the teachings of the Buddha, may broadly be divided into two sections: the Hīnayāna (in Pali and mixed Sanskrit) and the Mahāyāna (in mixed and pure Sanskrit). It can be further sub-divided into literatures of different sects of both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna schools.

The Pali *Tipiṭaka* represents the earliest available and the most complete collection of the Buddhist religious texts. It is in the form

[1]For a detailed study of the controversy vide Pande, G.C., *Origins*, Allahabad, 1957; Warder, A.K., *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970, pp. 81–156; Varma, V.P., *Early Buddhism and its Oiigins*, New Delhi, 1973.

of three systematic *Piṭakas* meaning baskets in the sense of collections: (1) the *Vinaya Piṭaka* or the collection of books on discipline; (2) the *Sutta Piṭaka* or the collection of books of discourses; and (3) the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* or the collection of books on higher religion or metaphysics.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, which is usually placed at the head of the canon, contains rules, sometimes very minute and on trivial subjects, for the conduct of Buddhist monks and nuns. As the Buddha lived for about 45 years after the 'Wheel of Law' was set in motion, it is certain that he settled many of the rules himself. But it is also certain that other rules grew up after his death though they were usually attributed to him The *Vinaya* comprises the following texts: (1) *Pātimokkha*—It gives a list of 227 rules of discipline (originally 152 only) together with atonements for transgressing them. (2) *Suttavibhaṅga*—It contains explanation of the suttas of the *Pātimokkha* with a short historical introduction. It comprises the *Mahāvibhaṅga* and the *Bhikkhuni vibhaṅga*. (3) *Khandaka* —It is a continuation of the *Suttavibhaṅga* and comprises two divisions—*Mahāvagga* and *Chullavagga*. (4) *Parivāra*—It is a later composition and seeks to give a résumé of the earlier texts (for details see Ch. 7).

The *Sutta Piṭaka* professes to record the sayings (*suttas*) of the Buddha himself in his own words, usually in the form of a dialogue with some one, often Socratic in the method of questioning. Occasionally one of his disciples repeats the saying of the Buddha. The suttas are accompanied with short introductions to indicate when and where did Gautama or his disciple speak. It is divided into five Nikāyas: (i) *Dīgha Nikāya* or the collection of long independent treatises, 34, in number; (ii) *Majjhima Nikāya* or the collection of suttas of moderate size, 152 in number; (iii) *Saṁyutta Nikāya* or the collection of connected treatises of kindred sayings, grouped in 56 saṁyuttas, usually divided into vaggas (*Sagātha*, *Nidāna*, *Saḷāyatana*, *Khanda* and *Mahā*); (iv) *Aṅguttara* or *Ekuttara Nikāya* or the collection of sermons the length of which increases by one and which consists of eleven sections or *nipātas*; (v) *Khuddaka Nikāya* or the collection of short miscellaneous treatises.[1]

The *Khuddaka Nikāya* contains fifteen works. They are: (*Khuddaka pāṭha* or short passages; (ii) *Dhammapada* or collection of moral precepts in the form of 423 sayings of the Buddha; (iii) *Udāna*,

[1] The *Khuddaka* is sometimes classed with the *Abhidhamma*.

or short lyrics, 82 in number, supposedly uttered by the Buddha under strong emotion ; (iv) *Itivattuka*, containing 110 sayings of the Buddha ; (v) *Sutta Nipāta*, containing didactic poems, 70 in number ; (vi) *Vimānavatthu* or stories of celestial mansions ; (vii) *Petavatthu*, a treatise on the departed spirits ; (viii) *Theragāthā*, or the gāthās composed by the monks ; (ix) *Therīgāthā*, or the gāthās composed by the nuns ; (x) *Jātakas* or stories of Buddha's former births ; (xi) *Niddesa*, a treatise on the explanation of the *Sutta Nipāta* composed by Sāriputta ; (xii) *Paṭisaṁbhidāmagga*, or treatise on intuitive insight ; (xiii) *Apadāna*, or treatise on the legends about arhats or saints ; (xiv) *Buddhavaṁsa*, a work on the lives of preceding Buddhas and Gautama Buddha ; and (xv) *Chariyā Piṭaka*, or treatise on Gautama's deeds in former births or a collection of Jātakas in versified form.

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, as its name suggests, purports to discuss metaphysics or higher religion (*abhidhamma*), but actually its treatises deal with the same subjects as the *Sutta Piṭaka*, though in a more scholastic way. It comprises seven books known as *Sattapakaraṇa*, viz. (i) *Dhammasaṅgiṇī*, (ii) *Vibhaṅga*, (iii) *Kathāvatthu*, (iv) *Puggalapaññati*, (v) *Dhātukathā*, (vi) *Yamaka* and (vii) *Paṭṭhāṇa*. All these books are quite late in date. For example the *Kathāvatthu* is usually ascribed to Moggaliputta Tissa (3rd cent. B.C.) though Winternitz rightly assigns parts of it to a still later period.

Problem of the Authenticity of Pali Canon

Originally the *Tripiṭaka* was composed in Pali, Māgadhī and other dialects; of these the Pali version has alone survived in full. Of the rest, only fragments are now available. Unfortunately at present we have no complete Buddhist canon in Sanskrit. It appears, however, that the Sarvāstivādins had Sanskrit Āgamas corresponding to the Pali Nikāyas and seven books of *Abhidhamma* corresponding to the seven books of the Pali *Abhidhamma*. The Mūla-sarvāstivādins also possessed a *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Large sections of this, preserved in the Gilgit Manuscripts, are now available. The Pali canon can broadly be placed between the death of the Buddha (483 B.C.) and the reign of Vaṭṭagāmiṇī of Ceylon when it was first put to writing (c. 30 B.C.). Though the orthodox Buddhists claim that the whole *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* (according to *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* even the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*) were recited in the First Council held immediately after the Buddha, but modern scholars do not accept this belief. Here it is not

possible to discuss the problems of the authenticity and chronology of the Pali canon in detail, but opinions and some general conclusions of some competent scholars may be mentioned. According to Conze the scriptures of each of the eighteen schools in the first period of Buddhist history "can equally claim to represent the teachings of the Buddha." "It is now well-known that Pāli was not the language of the Buddha, but a dialect of the west of India. The Buddha spoke some kind of Māgadhī, and all his sayings like those of Jesus, are *lost in their original form*."[1] But it has rightly been pointed out that the Sanskrit and Chinese canons of the Sarvāstivāda and other schools also do not represent the language of the Buddha.[2] "All of the existing canons represent the preservation and interpretation of the Dhamma by various schools of Buddhism at various distances from the original Sthaviras. A pure Māgadhī canon does not exist, but if one is attempting, as Conze is, to retrace the teachings back to an 'original canon', then he must recognise that the Pāli language is at least as closely related to Māgadhī as Sanskrit and much more closely related than Chinese."[3] A. K. Warder defended the authenticity of the Pāli canon when he said: "Of the eighteen or more recensions of the *Tripiṭaka* handed down in the schools, the Sthaviravāda *Tripiṭaka* now preserved in the Pāli language (a West Indian language, apparently that of Avanti when the school had its main center in that country) is certainly one of the most authentic in the sense of preserving the discourses of the Buddha in their wordings as recognized before the schisms."[4]

Conze has also maintained that Theravada represents an especially peripheral and sectarian form of Buddhism because it developed its 'mentality' at 'the confines of the sea' in Śrī Laṅkā away from the 'central tradition'. But this view has also been rightly questioned. The Theravāda chronicles of Ceylone record the legend of Mahendra's mission bringing Buddhism from Aśoka's empire to Śrī Laṅkā. Thus they relate Theravāda Buddhism to the predominant Buddhism of India of the Aśokan period. As the missionary activities of Aśoka as recorded in the Ceylonese chronicles seem to

[1]Conze, Edward, 'Recent Progress in Buddhist Studies', in *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, Oxford, 1967, pp. 3–4.

[2]Bond, G. D., 'Theravāda Buddhism and the Aims of Buddhist Studies', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, p. 49.

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, 1970, p. 296.

have been confirmed by archaeological evidence, the Theravāda claim appears to be justified. It may also be pointed out that the Pali canon contains none of the references to people or events in Śrī Laṅkā which one would expect if it had developed there. The indications are there that the Pali canon was largely complete when it reached Śri Laṅkā from India and that the Sinhalese Theravādins preserved it without substantial additions or alterations.

Problem of the Chronological Stratification of Canonical Works

As noted earlier, the *Abhidhamma* is regarded by all as of a late date (not earlier than the third century B.C.). As regards the other two Piṭakas it is now generally agreed that in their present form they are "not as old as the First or even the Second Council; but quotations from scriptures in the Aśokan edicts, references to persons well-versed in sacred texts in inscriptions of the second century B.C. and scriptures, reliefs and inscriptions on the railings and gateways at Bharhut and Sāñchī suggest that the works on Dharma and Vinaya were current before the Maurya and Śuṅga dynasties. The *Milinda pañho* is the earliest evidence of the existence of the three Piṭakas and five Nikāyas."[1] According to G. C. Pande, one of the greatest authorities on the subject, "it may be asserted that the growth of the Nikāyas falls between the 5th and the 3rd centuries B.C. The fact that the Nikāyas take but slight notice of the issues contested by the earliest sects certainly suggests that they had practically reached completion in the 1st century A.B.[2] The silence of the Vinaya over the Third Council suggests that it had reached the completion in the first two centuries A.B. The silence of the canon over Aśoka, which contrasts so strongly with later tradition, is also significant in this respect and suggests its antiquity."[3]

According to the Śri Laṅkā tradition the texts of the *Tripiṭaka* were transmitted orally for some 450 years, and this leads to doubts as to the reliability of even the earlier strata of the Pāli canon as a record of the teachings of the Buddha and of conditions in, or soon after, his time. But, as pointed out by Basham, certain features of the first four *Nikāyas* of the *Sutta Piṭaka* suggest a very considerable antiquity: "Their geographical horizon is very limited. The ports of Tāmalitti and Bhārukaccha, frequently referred to in later Pāli

[1]*AIU*, p. 408.
[2]That is, in the first century after the nirvāṇa of the Buddha.
[3]*Origins*, p. 11.

literature, and certainly important in the time of the Mauryas, are not mentioned. Śrī Laṅkā is outside the geographical horizon of the earlier Pāli texts, and the Deccan is rarely referred to. This suggests that they were compiled at a time when Aryan culture was confined mainly to the northern part of India, well before the days of Chandragupta Maurya. The main body of the first four *Nikāyas* contains no clear reference to the Mauryas, and the Buddha's prophecy on the site of Pāṭaliputra in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Digha*, II, 87-8) contains no hint of Aśoka, as might have been expected if the passage had been inserted during or after his reign. Pāṭaliputra became the capital of Magadha in the reign of Udāyin (c. 450 B.C.) and we would thus expect the passage in question to apply to a period between that date and c. 250 B.C.

"The only prophetic passage in the earlier stratum of the Pāli texts which does suggest a late date is the Buddha's well-known forecast of the disappearance of the true Dhamma in 500 years, because of the admission of women into the Order. This passage occurs in the *Aṅguttara* (IV, 278) and the *Vinaya* (II. 256), neither of which suggests a very great antiquity. It is always possible, of course, that the duration of 500 years was suggested at a very early period, long before it had elapsed, though for obvious reasons these cannot be the authentic words of Buddha himself: but we cannot escape the suspicion that the passage is the work of anti-feminist monks, at the time when heretical tendencies were very strong in the Order, and when not much less than 500 years had elapsed since the Nirvāṇa. This is linked with another passage (*Saṁyutta*, ii, 224) in which the Buddha is purported to have said that when the Good Dhamma disappears, an imitation (*paṭirūpaka*) of it will appear in the world. Buddhaghoṣa seems to interpret this as meaning various forms of Mahāyāna, and such may have been the intention of the author.

"References to the Yonas or Greeks occur chiefly in the commentaries, but there is one important mention of them in the earlier canon (*Majjhima*, ii, 149). This is not absolutely conclusive for a late date. The Kandahar Greek edict of Aśoka has given conclusive proof of the presence of Greek-speaking settlers on the borders of India in the third century B.C. and these may well have been there long before Alexander, since the Achaemenians established settlements of Asiatic Greeks in Bactria. One obviously late text in the four *Nikāyas* is the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda Sutta*, occurring towards the end

of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (iii, 58 ff.) among a number of suttas of uncertain date, which have a rather inauthentic flavour. The story of Nami, the Universal Emperor, owes much to Hindu legend; he conquers all India by peaceful persuation with the aid of his magic wheel, and such a tale could hardly have been composed before the time of Aśoka, though it is of course possible to suggest that it inspired Aśoka's policy rather than the reverse. Its warning that by introducing harsh legislation the magic wheel would disappear and the empire would crumble, suggests a post-Aśokan date, and this may well be a political tract composed by a critical Buddhist monk during the time of the later Mauryas. To this is added a prophecy of the future Buddha Metteya, who is mentioned very rarely in earlier Pāli literature and appears to be a comparatively late arrival on the scene, the result of the influence of Iranian soteriology.

"Exceptional suttas and passages in them, however, do not invalidate our broad contention that the main body of the four *Nikāyas* reflects the life and thought of pre-Mauryan times. We have grave doubts, on the other hand, about the *Vinaya Piṭaka.* Whatever the antiquity of the *Pātimokkha* rules, the *Vinaya* as a whole appears to be a late production, with little relevance to the Buddha's own day. The minute regulations of every aspect of the monastic life, and the minute classification of faults and lapses of discipline, strongly suggest a powerful and widespread Order with many years of development behind it and not a religious movement in its infancy. The stories of how the rules came to be formulated by the Buddha have scarcely any more authenticity than similar accounts of how the *Jātaka* tales came to be told. Some of these may contain tradition handed down from an early period but most, if not all, are evidently *post hoc* anecdotes concocted to give authority to the rules to which they are related. Moreover, the *Vinaya* contains more frequent references to writing and coined money than do the four *Nikāyas*, and its geographical horizon is probably wider. The conclusion of the *Cullavagga* (ii, 284–308), containing an account of the Councils of Rājagaha and Vesāli, is obviously much later than the time of the Buddha, and the *Parivāra* is explicitly stated to have been composed in Śrī Laṅkā, the work of the monk Dīpa. We believe that most of the Pāli *Vinaya* reflects conditions in the Order not earlier than the days of Aśoka, when there were evidently severe 'purges' of the Buddhist church.

"Much of the miscellaneous material of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* is

evidently very late. The prose *Jātaka*, which is still often taken to reflect conditions in the Buddha's day, or even before it,[1] is evidently on a par with the commentaries of Buddhaghoṣa and his school, and though the plots of some of the stories may go back to a very remote antiquity, the conditions reflected in them are very different from those of the main body of the canon, and the geographical horizon is far wider. It is possible that the stories were put into something like their present form in the Śātavāhana Empire around the beginning of the Christian Era.[2] The *Jātaka* verses show wider geographical knowledge than the four main *Nikāyas*, and we are not convinced that they are particularly ancient. It is generally thought that much of the *Sutta Nipāta* is very old, chiefly on linguistic grounds, and this may be the case. The *Petavatthu* (iv. 3), on the other hand, contains a definite reference to the Mauryas in a context which indicates that their empire had ceased to exist."[3]

Four Noble Truths or Dukkhavāda

According to N. Dutt we may accept as original those teachings of the Buddha which are repeated at several places in the Nikāyas.[4] Most of the traditions agree about three or four suttas (e.g. the *Ariyapariyesanāsutta*, the *Dhammachakkapavattanasutta*, the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*) having been delivered by the Buddha. They contain substantially all of his teachings. The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* states that after the attainment of bodhi, the Buddha became hesitant to teach his dhamma mainly in connection with the theory of causation, known as Paṭichchasamuppāda. But the starting point of his religion is suffering (*dukkha*) which is actually the starting point of all Śramaṇic philosophies and what is sought after is Nirvāṇa by following the Middle Path. The Buddha had obviously fallen under the influence of the prevailing philosophical mood of Dukkhavāda (sorrowism). He pondered deeply over the distressing phenomena of old age, disease, poverty, death and the various other forms of sorrow which are inherent in life. The first part of the *Dhammachakkapabattanasutta* contains the exposition

[1] Mehta, R. N., *Pre-Buddhist India*, Bombay, 1939.
[2] Kosambi, D. D., *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, pp. 259–60.
[3] Basham, A. L., 'The Background to the Rise of Buddhism', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, pp. 22–4, n. 3.
[4] Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 134.

of the Middle Path. In the second part of this sermon he explains his views about sorrow in the formulation of the famous Four Noble Truths (Chattāri Ariya Sachchāni) thus :

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of Pain (*Dukkha*). Birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, sorrow, lamentation, defection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short, the five khaṅdhas of grasping are painful.

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Pain (*Dukkha-samudaya*) : that craving (*taṇhā=tṛshṇā*) which leads to rebirth with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Pain (*Dukkha-nirodha*) : the cessation without remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, un-attachment.

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the Way that Leads to the Cessation of Pain (*Dukkha-nirodha-gāminī Paṭipadā*) : this is the Noble Eightfold Path (*Āryāshṭāṅgamārga*), namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Thus, O monks, only doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, light arose.'

To sum up, what the Buddha taught in the First Sermon at Isipattana was this : (a) life, as it is generally lived, is inevitably mixed up with sorrow; through the gate of birth we pass into the valley of sorrow and pain; (b) it is craving or desire that leads to rebirth and hence to sorrow; (c) in order to get rid of sorrow we must destroy its root cause, namely craving, and (d) this can be done by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

Suffering originates from *taṇhā* or desire or thirst which has three aspects—*kāmataṇhā*, *bhavataṇhā* and *vibhavataṇhā*. In order to show their falsity, the teachings of the undesirableness of sensual pleasures (*ādittapariyāya*), of no-soul theory (*anatta*) and impermanence (*anichcha*) were brought about. In the *ādittapariyāya* the world of sensual desires has been described as the world on fire, a world burning with the fires of *rāga* (attachment), *dosa* (vice) and *moha* (fondness).[1] Further, human beings desire to exist forever without

[1]Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 65.

realizing the true nature of self. The Buddha struck at the root of this fallacy by his doctrines of *anatta* and *anichcha* (*infra*).

Various views have been advanced regarding the true meaning of *dukkha*. Stcherbatsky appears to believe that dukkha is unrest,[1] while actually unrest is only the outcome of *dukkha*, not *dukkha* itself. According to Coomaraswamy, 'Dukkha is to be understood both as a symptom and disease.'[2] It was probably to reconcile such views that the Nikāyas speak of three kinds of *dukkhatā—dukkha dukkhatā* or the direct contact of the senses with unpleasureable feelings (e.g. when the skin is cut); *pariṇāma dukkhatā* or the feeling of pain emanating from the result of pleasure on account of its changeability and impermanence; and *saṅkhāra dukkhatā* which is connected with the doctrine of karman, for actions are ever in search of an opportunity to lead to pain either in this life or in the next.[3] The *Vinaya* in a qualified manner calls the five upādānakhandhas as dukkha. But as the world means nothing beyond them, some texts declare that all things are dukkha. The Kukkulavādins or the Gokulikas even denied the existence of *sukha saṃvedanā*. According to them pleasure is nothing but merely the absence of pain. But the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins argue that it would be absurd to disbelieve in the existence of pleasure when one believes in the existence of pain. If there was no satisfaction to be found in the world, beings would not be attached to it. Therefore the undesirability of pleasure only means the undesirability of *dukkha* inherent in it. The Buddha realized that pain cannot be conceived without pleasure, but he concluded that as pleasure too results in pain, it should not be aspired for.[4]

It has been suggested by Kern that the formula of the Four Noble Truths was borrowed by Buddhism from medical science.[5] In the *Vyādhisūtra* the Four Truths have been compared with their medical counterpart—disease, diagnosis, cure and medicine and in the *Lalitavistara* the Buddha has been attributed the epithet 'Vaidyarāja'.[6]

That the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths was included in the

[1]Quoted by Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 66; cf. Saddhatissa, 'Dukkha, the First Noble Truth', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, pp. 78-79.

[2]Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 83

[3]Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 67 f.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 68-9.

[5]Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 67 f.

[6]Quoted by Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

original teachings of the Buddha can hardly be doubted.[1] The weight and importance attached to it in all texts prove it, though Mrs. Rhys Davids held a contrary view.[2] But her skepticism has not met general approval. A 'dissatisfaction with the existent set-up is the necessary preceding state for a reform in any field; Buddha saw something wrong with the world around him and he proceeded to find out what is lacked and needed.'[3] Similarly her view that the word dukkha used in the texts points merely to the ills of body and mind and lacks a conception of ills in the spiritual realm,[4] does not seem to be convincing. According to G. C. Pande "such expressions as define dukkha in terms of birth, disease, old age and death should . . . be understood symbolically, not literally. When the Buddhist, contemplating life, was sorely distressed to see its limitation and uncertainties, he was surely feeling what may be called spiritual discontent . . . he did not mean merely to speak of a discontent of body and mind, but rather of discontent with body and mind, and this latter is the form of all spiritual discontent."[5]

The dukkhavāda of Buddhism, and also of Jainism, did not evolve from the early Vedic religion. The Ṛgvedic people wanted to live a full life of hundred years and more. But in the Upanishads the theme of the burden of the world with its fatalities and contradictions begins to weigh heavily upon the minds of the thinkers. Sometimes they explicitly say that everything else is full of sorrow—*anyadārtam*. However they looked upon the worldly sorrows against the background of the plentitude of bliss of Brahman. Secondly, the Upanishadic passages which refer to the miserable character of the world are not many. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* contains the world *lokadukkha* but this text is a comparatively late composition. There are pessimistic strains in the *Maitrāyaṇī* but it is regarded as post-Buddhist.[6] Some of the greatest names in the Upanishads are those of householders and kings. Ushasta Chakrāyaṇa, Uddālaka Āruṇi and

[1]Oldenberg, *Buddha*, pp. 197–8; Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 173; Winternitz, *HIL*, II, p. 2.

[2]Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Gotama the Man*, pp. 147–48; *What was the Original Gospel in Buddhism?*, p. 378.

[3]Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 64.

[4]Mrs. Rhys Davids, *What was the Original Gospel?*, pp. 56–7.

[5]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 403; cf. Thera, C. Nayanasatta, '*Dukkha*, Contemplation of Suffering', *World Buddhism*, XL, No. 7, p. 21.

[6]Pande, *Origins*, App. III, p. 575 ff. The *Maitrāyaṇī* contains allusions to Buddhism.

Satyakāma Jābāla lived the normal lives of peaceful householders. Raikva was notorious for his love of gifts and fees. Yājñavalkya accepted plenty of cows and gold from king Janaka. They all engaged in philosophical discussions but they felt no urgency to renounce the world.

Here it may also be noted that the Buddha had himself "rejected outright all those views which might be generalised as Āstika (Belief in the existence of the Supreme God, the Creator), Nāstika (Annihilationism as also Materialism), and Daiṣṭika (Determinism or Fatalism) or as Śāśvata (Eternalism) and Uccheda (Nihilism) or a mixture of the two (Partial Eternalism and Partial Nihilism). He did not expressly refer to the Upaniṣads or to the philosophy embodied in them but it is clear that he was fully cognizant of the Brahmanical view of Jīvātman and Paramātman and also of the theory of origin of the world of beings. . . . There are, however, clear and repeated assertions that the only reality is Nibbāna, which is not mere negation of everything (*abhāvamātra*) and that all the constituted objects of the world are unreal."[1]

Various theories have been advanced for explaining the emergence of dukkhavāda in Indian philosophy. According to the psychoanalytic theory the roots of the theory of *dukkha* are to be found in the psychological neuroses of the Buddha himself. He was an extraordinarily sensitive and tender personality and the all-pervasiveness of sorrow which appeared to reveal itself to him through the old man, the diseased man and the corpse was only an exaggerated interpretation put upon a commonplace phenomenon.[2] According to another explanation the dulling and enervating effects of the eastern regions were responsible for the philosophy of Upanishads and the dukkhavāda of Buddhism both.[3] A third, anthropological, explanation of the Buddhist dukkhavāda is found in the theory of racial admixture. According to Griswold for example the racial fusion of the Aryans and Dravidians was possibly the cause of the melancholy temperament of the Indians.[4] A fourth explanation is offered by the

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[2]Cf. Wells, H. G., *The Outline of History*, New York, 1931, p. 390; Streeter, B. H., *The Buddha and the Christ*, London, 1932, p. 62; cf. also Griswold, H. G., *ERE*, IX, p. 812.

[3]Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 264; cf. Tagore, Rabindranath, *Sādhanā*, Ch. 1; Melamed, *Spinoza and Buddha*, p. 235; Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, II, p. 469.

[4]Griswold, *op. cit.*

Marxist philosophy which believes that the pessimistic ideology of despair and nullity was preached by the exponents of the interests of the dominant classes in order to benumb the zeal and revolutionary fervour of the suppressed strata. For example Rāhula Sāṁkṛtyāyana makes three factors responsible for the Upanishadic gloom: (a) suppressed sense of revolt of the exploited; (b) social inequalities; and (c) internal quarrels among the exploiting sections.[1] On the other hand, some scholars emphasize the elements of unhappiness brought about by the political upheavals and vicissitudes of the period. For example according to Stevenson the notion of dukkha emphasized in Buddhism and other contemporary systems was a theoretical formulation of an actual concrete miserable situation.[2] Men hoped to evade the avaricious fingers of the king by renouncing everything that could be taken from them. According to Coomaraswamy,[3] however, the pessimism of Buddhism and other philosophies was the result of the accumulation of philosophical experience. At times a philosophical probe into the nature and procession of the world does indicate immensity of suffering. A philosophy that teaches that things are as they should be is no philosophy at all. Buddha's stress on the dark side of the phenomena of the world was based upon his perceptions and experiences. To us it appears that the Buddhist dukkhavāda was the result of the intuitional experience of its founder,[4] though other factors discussed above also played their role.

Pratītyasamutpāda (Law of Causation)

Pratītyasamutpāda or the law of dependent origination was a great contribution of the Buddha to the philosophical thoughts of India of the 5th century B.C.[5] *Pratītyasamutpāda* (Pali, *Paṭichchasamuppāda*) means that every object or being is subject to dissolution and the objects that dissolve appear (samutpāda) again and again (*Pratītyasamutpāda=idaṁ sati idaṁ hoti*=this being so, that happens). It is also called the law of *Idaṁpratyayatā* or *Idappachchayatā* (=

[1] *Darśana Digdarśana*, p. 382 ff.
[2] Stevenson, S., *The Heart of Jainism*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 3.
[3] Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, p. 180.
[4] Varma, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 137.
[5] Cf. Gokhale, V. V., 'Gotama's Vision of Truth', *Brahmavidyā*, Adyar, XXX, pp. 105–21.

the things of this world are this conditioned or interdependent) and *Majjhima Dhamma* (=The Middle Path).

The Buddha is stated to have discovered the Truth of Paṭichchasam° during his Sambodhi, and finding it too difficult and subtle for ordinary comprehension, to have hesitated in preaching it. He agreed to preach it only after he was requested to do so by Brahmā. That the formula is the most ancient one and in some form or the other goes back to the Buddha himself is proved by the conversation which took place only a few months after the Enlightenment between Sāriputta, then a non-Buddhist wanderer, and Arhat Assaji. When questioned by the former the latter defines the dhamma briefly thus: "The Tathāgata has explained the origin of those things which proceed from a cause. Their cessation too he has explained. This is the doctrine of the Great Śramaṇa"[1] (*Ye dhammā hetuprabhavā tesaṁ hetuṁ Tathāgato āha. Tesaṁ cha yo nirodho evaṁ vādī Mahāsamaṇo*) Probably it was from such a brief formula that the detailed chain of causation was later on postulated. In any case, all sects of Buddhism agree on its significance and it has been identified with Dhamma and the Buddha in ancient sayings as well as later texts both of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. "The universally recognized importance of the idea, its equal obscurity, and its occurrence in some of the most ancient passages of the Nikāyas testify to its authenticity."[2]

As the 'Middle Doctrine' Paṭichchasamuppāda seeks to avoid both Sat and Asat, Being (*Atthita*) and Non Being (*Natthita*). "It denies that things just are, pure and immutable, or that they are a nihil. It denies that they just happen without an intelligible law, as a matter of chance, of fiat, or natural freak. And it denies that one thing actively produces another, or that one thing comes out of another. It denies Eternalism (Sassatavāda), Nihilism (Ucchedavāda), Fortuitionism (Adhiccasamuppāda), and anthropomorphic, or dynamic causality . . . Paṭiccasam° appears now as a law relating to events which do not happen in isolation. It thus resolves the world into a procession, and sees a necessary order in its sequence."[3] Thus for the Buddha, becoming was an undeniable and extremely significant fact about the finite world. By this law he sought to

[1]Bhikshu Sangharakshita, in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. by A. L. Basham, p. 85.

[2]Pande, *Origins*, p. 412.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 423 f.

establish that the world was "neither a creation of God nor its origin was accidental nor it was issued out of the ever existing Prakṛti nor it was a composite of eternal atoms (*aṇuparamāṇu*) nor was it pre-determined as held by the Ājīvikas."[1] Further, it sought to prove that the world was caused and not uncaused and that it is "in a dynamic state and is never static even for a moment. In other words, it is only a series of point-instants. From this it follows that the beings and objects of the world have only dependent origination and hence they are impermanent and sources of misery, and that except *Nibbāna* and *Ākāsa*, there is nothing that is not originated by sequence of causes and conditions. This law also shows that all that is thus caused and conditioned is evanescent and without any substance. It explains the fixed, unchangeable and this-conditioned (*idappaccayatā*) nature of beings and objects."[2] For the Buddha all phenomenal objects have existence though it is only momentary (*kshaṇika*), similar to waves on the sea. These waves are not purely imaginary and do exist, but only for a moment; hence they are impermanent (*anitya*).

Thus the Buddha inculcated the belief that the universe is *anichcha* (impermanent or ever-changing). At the same time he maintained that it is dukkha and in startling opposition to the Upanishadic philosophy also apparently taught that it is *anatta*, i.e. without a non-changing abiding entity called *attā* (*ātman*) or soul (*infra*) and that it is the non-comprehension (*avijjā*) or only partial grasping of this three-fold nature of the universe that gives rise to *taṇhā* and ultimately leads to sorrow.[3]

In the Buddhist texts such as the *Mahānidānasūtra* an attempt has been made to elaborate the theory of Pratītyasamutpāda or causation by a chain of twelve factors that elucidate the relationship between *avijjā* (ignorance) and *dukkha* (sorrow): from ignorance (*avijjā*) arises imagination (*saṁkhāra*), from imagination arises consciousness (*vijñāna*), from consciousness arise name and form (*nāmarūpa*), from name and form arises the sphere of the six (*shaḍāyatana*), from the sphere of the six arises contact (*phassa* or *sparśa*), from contact arises sensation (*vedanā*), from sensation arises craving (*taṇhā*), from craving arises grasping (*upādāna*), from grasping arises becoming (*bhava*), from becoming arises birth (*jāti*) and from birth

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 106 ff.

as cause arise old age, death (*jarā maraṇa*), grief, lamentation, pain, dejection and despair (*sokka-pari deva-dukkha-domanassa 'upāyāsa*).[1] So long *avijjā* and craving are not overcome the cycle of re-births (*saṁsāra*) will continue and there will be no emancipation from the shackles of sorrow implied in birth. With the cessation of ignorance and craving, the necessity of re-birth will come to an end and the state of emancipation, Nirvāṇa, will be reached.[2] However, although the idea of interdependence can be seen as the basic thought of Buddha's discourses, the form of twelve aṅgas is not mentioned in the early Buddhist texts as the *Suttanipāta*. In the *Āgama* (that is the Nikāyas) one finds various forms of *aṅga-paṭicca samuppāda* with different numbers of factors and different names. Among them the twelve-factors came to be regarded as the representative and most developed form of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in a long process of development."[3]

Paṭichchasamuppāda is commonly supposed to represent Buddha's explanation of suffering. Jacobi's suggestion[4] that this formula was derived from Sāṅkhya scheme of evolution was endorsed by Schrader while Senart posited the influence of Yoga.[5] It is of course true that Sāṅkhya, like Buddhism, sees the origin of dukkha in desire-promoted actions and the origin of desire in some sort of 'ignorance', but as pointed out by G.C. Pande the idea of *avidyā* is in a way common to all systems of Indian philosophy. According to him "the comparison between the Sāṅkhya scheme of the Tattvas and Pratityasamutpāda appears to be forced."[6]

Modern opinion has varied also on the significance of the theory of Paṭichchasamuppāda. Keith thought that the chain aimed at explaining the origin of evil, and that it does not denote a causation in nature.[7] On the other hand Rhys Davids considered the formula

[1]Cf. Yamada, Isshi, 'Premises and Implications of Interdependence (Pratītya samutpāda)', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, Delhi, 1980, pp. 373–99; also see Bodhi, Bhikshu, *Great Discourse on Causation* (The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentarial Exegesis), Kandy, 1984.

[2]Cf. Baptist, E.C., 'Buddhist Law of Dependent Origination', *Buddhist*, Colombo, XXXII, pp. 161–4; *Ibid.*, XXXVII, No. 4, pp. 100–103.

[3]Yamada, *op. cit.*, p. 387, n. 1.

[4]Quoted in *Origins*, p. 407.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]*Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 112.

as the first clear enunciation in history of the principle of natural causality in all phenomena.[1] Mrs. Rhys Davids too takes the formula as an expression of law exactly in the sense that *ṛta* and *vrata* were used in the earlier periods but had come into disuse for the gods with whom they were associated had lost their importance.[2] Oldenberg believes that the formula of 'the Causal Nexus of Being' was drawn up to strengthen the tenets regarding the origin and cessation of suffering.[3] Coomaraswamy enunciates the idea more clearly when he says that "it is the grasp of the very fact that we are mechanisms, causally determined . . . that points out the way of escape."[4]

Significantly, for the Buddha the realization of Truth or Sambodhi consists of Pratītyasamutpāda and Nirvāṇa both. In the passage within the Brahmayāchanā context, the Buddha dichotomised his Dhamma into Paṭichchasam° and Nibbāna. According to Pande, "Since Nibbāna is apparently the final principle or experience, Paṭiccasam° may be designated as the principle of non-ultimate experience."[5] The relation between the two seems parallel to the relation between Brahma and Māyā in the philosophy of Śaṅkara.

The Problem of Soul (*Attā*)

There are three basic doctrines of early Buddhism—sorrowism (*dukkhavāda*), impermanence (*anityatā*) and non-soulism (*anātmavāda*). Since there is nothing permanent and everything is in a state of flux, it automatically follows that the soul as a self-subsisting entity does not exist.[6] Soon after the *upasampadā* of the Pañchavargīya Bhikshus the Buddha gave a discourse to them on the theory of *anātman* (*anatta*) and emphatically stated that *rūpa*, *saṁjña* (*saññā*), *vedanā*, *saṁskāra* (*saṅkhāra*) and *vijñāna* (*viññāna*) do not constitute the self. The belief in the existence of soul or, in other words, the heresy of individuality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) is due to the misapprehension of one of the five constituents (*khandhas*) as the

[1]Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, II, p. 42 ff.
[2]Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Gotama the Man*, pp. 77–78.
[3]*Buddha*, pp. 226–27.
[4]*Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 80, n. 225.
[5]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 414.
[6]Mahathera, Saddhatissa, H., 'The Anatta Doctrine', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 9–10, pp. 194–6.

soul.[1] Many other texts preach the doctrine of *anatta*. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, when Ānanda asks the Buddha the meaning of the phrase 'the world is empty', the latter replies, "That is empty Ānanda, of a self or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is that that is thus empty? The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind all these are void of a self or of anything that is self-like."[2] In the *Majjhima Nikāya* the doctrine of the permanence of soul is called a foolish doctrine. What is liable to pain and corruption cannot be the self of a thing.[3]

It is thus evident that the Buddha explicitly denied the self in the phenomenal realm. To this extent his views were not opposed to the orthodox Brāhmaṇical views as expounded in the Upanishads. For what he here denies is that any of the Khandas may have *attā*, not the *attā* as such. But what about the transcendent-immanent self as inculcated in the Upanishads? Different scholars answer this question differently. According to Stcherbatsky and Rāhula Sāṁkṛtyāyana the Buddha did not believe in the existence of soul of any type. His dhamma was thoroughly *anattavādī*.[4] According to Rhys Davids at the time of the Buddha there were prevalent in North India animistic, polytheistic, pantheistic and dualistic views. The belief in *attā* or soul was fundamental for all of them. The Buddha not only ignored it but regarded it as a hindrance in spiritual progress.[5] According to Vidhushekhar Shastri the denial of soul by the Buddha emanated from the fact that he found in his experience nothing that paralleled the supposed characteristics of the Ātman, viz. independence, permanence and blissfulness.[6] According to Poussin in the Pali literature there are many passages supporting anattavāda but a few which support *attā*.[7] Hegel regarded Buddhism as a creed of final negation.[8] Edward Caird interpreted Buddhism as a doctrine of Nirvāṇic extinction. Streeter and Melamed

[1]Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 232.

[2]*Saṁyutta Nikāya*, IV. 54.

[3]*Majjhima Nikāya*, I.138.

[4]Sāṁkṛtyāyana, R., *Bauddha Darśana*, pp. 22–3; Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism*; Malalasekera, G. P., 'The Unique Doctrine of Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 5–6, pp. 63–9.

[5]Rhys Davids, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 29, *Buddhism*, pp. 95–9.

[6]Quoted in *Origins*, p. 482.

[7]Poussin, 'The Ātman in the Pali Canon,' *Indian Culture*, II, 1935–36, pp. 821–4.

[8]Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 167–72.

interpret Buddhism as a negative creed which denied the soul and the world.[1] Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids also in her earlier works put a negativist interpretation on the Buddhist *anatta*.[2]

However according to Prof. Schrader, the Buddha appeared as a 'soul-denier' to his contemporaries only because they conceived of the soul in an extremely anthropomorphic fashion, speaking of its form, weight, colour, etc.[3] In her later writings Mrs. Rhys Davids[4] has most vigorously supported the view that the Buddha did not propound the 'No-soul' theory and that it was a later monkish development, an imposition on the original gospel under the influence of the hostility toward the Brāhmaṇas. Commenting on a verse of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* which she compares with a passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, she states: "I believe it is far more likely, that the original speaker of the verse used *attā* in the sense in which the original speaker of the Upaniṣad utterance used *ātman*."[5] The view has been reiterated *mutatis mutandis* by Coomaraswamy[6] and Radhakrishnan.[7] At one place Radhakrishnan categorically says: "It is however wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddha . . . The Upaniṣads arrive at the ground of all things by stripping the self of veil after veil of contingency. At the end of this process they find the universal self, which is none of these finite entities, though the ground of them all. Buddha holds the same view, though he does not state it definitely."[8] According to Sogen[9] and Suzuki[10] also the Buddha denied the soul in the sense of a finite substantial individual but not in the sense of the absolute unity of the universe. The arguments of the scholars who generally

[1]All quoted by Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 154 f.

[2]Cf. her early works *Buddhism, a Study of the Buddhist Norm*, 1912, and *Buddhist Psychology*, 1914; also see her paper, 'Soul Theory in Buddhism', *JRAS*, 1903.

[3]Quoted in *Origins*, p. 483.

[4]Cf. her *Gotama the Man*, 1928; *What was the Original Gospel in Buddhism?*; *Śākya or Buddhist Origins*, 1931, etc.

[5]Quoted by Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

[6]Coomaraswamy, *Living Thoughts of the Buddha*; *Hinduism and Buddhism*; cf. Gour, H. S., *The Spirit of Buddhism*, p. 285.

[7]*Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 386–9; cf. also Chatterji, J. C., 'The Buddha and the Ātman', *Prabuddha Bhārata*, LXIII, No. 3, pp. 91–8.

[8]*Op. cit.*, p. 388; cf. Bahm, Archie J., 'Was Gautama a Buddhist?,' *Bulletin of Ram Krishna Mission Institute of Culture*, XV, pp. 9–15.

[9]Sogen, Y.; *Systems of Buddhist Thought*.

[10]Suzuki, D. T., *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1927.

claim that the Buddha did not deny the existence of soul as a transcendental entity (though their views differ in detail) may be summarized as under:

(1) Mrs. Rhys Davids has argued that had the Buddha raised a revolt against the theory of soul as accepted in the Upanishads he would have brought it forward while in controversy with the learned Brāhmaṇas, which he did not do.

(2) There are some compound words which occur in early texts in which the word *atta* or *attā* is used in a sense different from that of man as a complex of body and mind only. Such are *Ajjhatta*, *Pachchatta*, *Attabhāva*, *Pahitatta* and *Bhāvitatta*. According to G. C. Pande, at least in the first of these compounds the argument has some weight. The belief of the Buddha in the existence of *attā* may also be deduced from the statement in the Mallikā section of the *Kosala Saṁyutta* according to which the *attā* is the dearest in the whole world and that an 'attakāma' should not injure another. In a few passages *attā* is used in the sense of the 'inner monitor' or conscience.[1] In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha asks thirty Bhadravargīya bhikshus to make a search after soul—*attānaṁ gaveseyyātha*. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* the words *ātmadīpa* and *ātmaśaraṇa* are used to exhort the bhikshus to regard the *attā* as their light and refuge.[2] However here the aim of the Buddha appears to emphasize individual efforts; the existence of a metaphysical soul need not be regarded as necessarily implied.

(3) In the *Dharmachakrapravartanasūtra* delivered at Sarnath the Buddha said that what is evil and painful cannot be the *ātman*. The supporters of Buddhist attavāda argue that this denial of selfhood to the phenomenal modes implies the indirect positing of the reality of the transcendent superior 'I'.

(4) One of the grounds in support of ātmavāda in Buddhism is the belief in heavens and hells which are frequently mentioned in the Tripiṭakas. If after death the dead goes to heaven or hell in accordance with its merit or demerit, then it necessarily follows that there must first be a soul. In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha condemns a liar to hell. He has himself been said to have visited the various *lokas*. The belief in the existence of heavens and hells

[1] *Origins*, p. 488.
[2] Cf. Coomaraswamy in *JRAS*, 1938, pp. 680–81.

would become meaningful only if one concedes the existence of soul.

(5) Another proof which supports a positive interpretation of *attā* in Buddhism is its emphasis on *dhyāna*. Without positing a spiritual principle it is impossible to explain the ascending scales of mystical consciousness.[1]

(6) There are a number of references in the Buddhist scriptures to the blissful nature of Nirvāṇa. In the *Dhammapada*, Nirvāṇa is described as the state of highest happiness. In the *Theragāthā* and the *Therigāthā* also the rapturous and ecstatic state of Nirvāṇic bliss is described. These descriptions do not fit in with a negativistic notion of the final destiny of man.

(7) According to some texts, what survives a man's death is his *chitta* or *viññāna*. The doctrine is almost certainly pre-Buddhist. The Buddha seems to have modified rather than rejected it. *Viññāna* doubtless exists after death but it is not a permanent entity. It is in fact extremely changeable. But in Nirvāṇa its fluctuations cease and it rests in its own natural infinity and luminosity. Thus, viññāna resembles the ātman of some Upanishadic texts.[2]

(8) In the *Dhammapada*, *attā* is described as an entity which is very near and dear. Essentially self-dependent, it has great potentiality for good and evil. It is not only the same as *chitta*, it is also the man behind mind, in a way identical with it but in another something more than it.[3]

(9) Mid-way between the Purusha of the Upanishads and the Puggala of the Nikāyas is the expression Purisa-puggala. According to G. C. Pande it "signifies the individual acting, believing and experiencing the results of his acts." The Buddha himself gave sermons on puggalas of various classes. Usually the usage Purisa-puggala does not indicate a belief in self but the well-known *Bhārahāra sutta* is an exception for it clearly distinguishes between puggala and khandhas and describes the latter as burden of the former.[1]

[1]Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Dhyāna in Early Buddhism', *IHC*, III, 1927, pp. 689–715.

[2]*Origins*, p. 494 f.; cf. Wijesekara, O. H. De A., 'The Concept of Viññāna in Theravāda Buddhism', *JAOS*, 84, No. 3, pp. 254–9.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 488; cf. Shukla, Karunesh, 'Ātman in Buddhist Philosophy', *Poona Orientalist*, XXVII, No. 3–4, pp. 114–32.

[4]*Origins*, p. 490.

(10) In the famous Buddhist formula of *triśaraṇa* there is the surrender to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. If the Buddha was completely extinct after the parinirvāṇa, then there would seem no sense in making a surrender to him.

When asked directly, the Buddha is reported to have refused to answer the question about the existence of the ātman either positively or negatively. According to Keith[1] and Poussin[2] it was the result of his 'Agnosticism',[3] while according to Rosenberg the Buddha did not answer this question simply because the word ātman was meaningless for him.[4] Stcherbatsky's view that it was a custom in Buddha's time to remain silent when one wanted to answer negatively, is groundless[5] According to G. C. Pande in this regard the Mādhyamika approach seems to be the only correct one. When the Buddha did not speak positively or negatively about the ātman or the Tathāgata, he indicated his position most precisely. "Ātman and Anātman, existence and non-existence do not possess ultimate adequacy. One must avoid such 'extreme' or categorical characterizations and try to follow the Middle Path in Metaphysics as in Ethics."[6] . . . "Nirvāṇa remains indescribable in terms of finite consciousness, for it is absolutely infinite. One describes it best by preserving 'silence', for, to say anything about it would be to make it relational and finite. On the theoretic side, Buddha appears to have adhered to this position so rigorously that his 'silence' has become enigmatic for all ages. For practical guidance, however, he not only indicated that the Absolute alone is eternal and beatific but also suggested a way to its direct realization. This attitude is clearly more 'mystical' than rational."[7] All this "cumulatively suggests an Absolutist position and supports the Mādhyamika interpretation. And this is hardly surprising, since, already before Buddha, Absolutism is in unmistakable terms expressed in the Upaniṣads."[8]

[1]Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 39–46.

[2]Poussin, in *ERE*, I, under 'Agnosticism'.

[3]Perera, T. H., 'Was Lord Buddha an Agnostic?', *Buddhist*, XXXVII, No. 5, pp. 137–9.

[4]Quoted in *Origins*, p. 505.

[5]Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 506.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 507 f.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 510; cf. Bhattacharya, Bidhushekhar, 'The Doctrine of Ātman and Anātman', *POC*, V, 1930, II, pp. 1002–6.

[8]*Origins*, p. 509.

Skandha Theory and the Doctrine of Rebirth

The Doctrine of *saṁsāra* or rebirth has a prominent place in the ancient systems of Indian thought. Most of the Indian religions adhere to it in some form or other. On anthropological evidence it is believed that some of the pre-historic races of India held a rudimentary notion of continuity of the dead person in some form or other.[1] According to Poussin "The belief in reincarnations was a purely savage surmise."[2] Bohtlingk, Ernst Windisch, Pischel, Geldner, Swami Dayananda, Ranade, etc. believe that the concept of *punarjanma* is as old as the *Brāhmaṇa* texts. Some of them find it in a vague form even in the *Ṛgveda*.[3] This has rightly been questioned. According to Oldenberg, Macdonell, S. Lévi, Bloomfield, Hopkins and G. C. Pande the idea of *punarjanma* was developed only in the age of the Upanishads. There is absolutely no trace of the doctrine of rebirth in the *RV*.[4] According to the Vedic poets after death the souls reside in the world of Yama. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1. 5. 3. 4. is supposed to contain a dubious allusion to the concept of transmigration, but as G. C. Pande has shown the usual attitude of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts towards after-life does not assume such a doctrine. The doctrine of transmigration "has ever been closely and essentially bound up with a number of other ideas" such as "belief in an innately immaculate and immortal conscious principle, recognition of the law of karman and deep-seated urge for Mukti."[5] Now, the *Brāhmaṇa* texts conceived soul in close connection with body and never thought it to be naturally immortal. The law of karman was also quite beyond the ken of their priests and their concept of immortality is just that of endless duration in a changeful world of sensuous enjoyment. Therefore it is hardly possible to imagine that the priests of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts knew and were responsible for the doctrine of rebirth.[6]

According to G. C. Pande the doctrine of rebirth originated

[1]Cf. *RHAI*, I, Ch. I.

[2]Poussin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa*, p. 18.

[3]Hopkins says, " . . . metampsychosis is also known in a vague form in the *Ṛgveda*" (*Hindu Ethics*, p. 44). Bohtlingk also finds allusions to rebirth in the *RV*, I. 164, 30–32. Ranade supports him (*A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*).

[4]Keith, *RPV*, II, p. 570 f.

[5]*Origins*, p. 283.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 284 f.

among the munis and śramaṇas of the Vedic age.[1] From them it was adopted by the Upanishadic thinkers. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad* there is a clear exposition of the belief in the transmigration of soul. Rebirth is regarded as being determined by one's intellectual and moral attainments. In this text there is the famous dialogue between Yama and Nachiketā in which Yama remarks that a being is reborn just as a ripened corn after decay reappears again.[2] In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* soul is described as a link between death and rebirth because it passes from one existence to another.[3] Buddhism accepts this concept of rebirth but unlike Upanishadic thinkers rejects the notion of the transmigration of a spiritual entity. According to Buddhism there is the rebirth of personality or of the psycho-physical complex—the *nāmarūpa skandhas*. As believers in the law of causation the Buddhists deliberately avoided the question of the existence of an entity, which becomes subject to feeling (*vedanā*), desire (*taṇhā*), strong attachment (*upādāna*) and desire for re-existence (*bhava*) and rebirth (*jāti*). According to them beings and inanimate objects of the word are *saṁskṛta*, so described on account of their being constituted of some elements, as distinguished from Nirvāṇa, the *asaṁskṛta* (the unconstituted). The constituted elements are put under two heads: *nāma* and *rūpa*, *nāma* denoting the non-material or mental constituents of a being, while *rūpa* the material only. All inanimate objects therefore are included in the term *rūpa*.[4] *Nāma* is analysed into four mental states namely *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (resultant impressions produced through karman) and *viññāna* (knowledge derived through the organs of senses) while the *Rūpakkhandha* denotes the four elements: earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*) and air (*vāyu*), including all that is formed out of these four. The four subdivisions of *nāma* with the fifth, the *rūpa*, are termed *Pañchakkhandhas*. Every being and object is a composite of these five *khandhas* (*skandhas* or groups of elements), without a sixth, the *puggala* or *attā* (=soul)[5] A living being composed of five *skandhas* is beginningless, and is in a continuous state of flux, each preceding group of *skandhas* giving rise to a subsequent group of *skandhas*, and

[1]For a similar view see Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgīta*, pp. 68–70.

[2]*Kaṭha*, 1.1.20.21.

[3]*Bṛ. Upa.*, IV. 4.3.5.

[4]Dutt, p. 197.

[5]*Ibid.*

this process is going on momentarily and ceaselessly in the present existence as it will go on also in the future until the eradication of *avidyā* and the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*. The Buddhists describe this process as rebirth and not transmigration and deny the existence of soul which supposedly passes from one existence to another like the caterpillar from one blade of grass to another.[1]

Theory of Karman

Karmavāda or theory of moral determinism represents one of the prime themes in Indian philosophical speculations and social life. The ordinary meaning of karman is deed or action. At a more comprehensive level it connotes motivation behind the action.[2] The Vedic seers adhered to the belief in *ṛta*—the cosmic law of harmony and order. This order was recognized not merely as a mechanical uniformity but as emanating from a superior moral force symbolised by the god Varuṇa. In the age of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the growth of the sacrificial religion hindered the emergence of the concept of karman.[3] As pointed out by G. C. Pande, "the idea of an inflexible moral law extending far beyond the grave" was quite beyond the ken of the priests of the Brāhmaṇa-books.[4] 'Karman' meant to them simply 'ritual act'. The other world is doubtless made (*kṛta*) but made by sacrifice.[5] It was in the age of the early Upanishads that the theory of karman made its emergence. Garbe was rightly of the opinion that the theory of karman was a new addition to the philosophical world-view of the Upanishads though he ascribed its formulation to the Kshatriyas. The "evident circumspection with which Yājñavalkya introduced Ārtabhāga to the idea of karman clearly shows that the idea was new to the priestly world and its favourable reception in that circle a matter of doubt. This is easily intelligible since the law of karman would be decidedly disadvantageous to the sacrificial priest. If moral quality of an action solely and irrevocably determines the future, man becomes the captain of his destiny; the priest and sacrifice, then, cease to be indispensable. More serious, through

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 227 f.; cf. Rashtrapala, Bhikshu, 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Rebirth', *World Buddhism*, XIV, No. 3, pp. 3–5.

[2]Cf. Poussin, 'Karma', in *ERE*, VII, pp. 673–7; cf. Mcdermott, James Paul, *Development in the Early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma*, New Delhi, 1984.

[3]*Contra*, Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

[4]Pande, *Origins*, p. 284.

[5]*Ibid.*, n. 190.

sacrifice one hoped to win divine favour; but if the 'acts' of a man were omnipotent where, indeed, would divine favour be? And if the gods did not possess the power of independent grace, were not sacrifice and prayer useless?"[1]

Thus the full realization of the implications of the theory of karman, Dr. Pande argues, was tantamount to a complete revision of the old Vedic eschatology and destined to usher in a silent revolution. Some priests tried to reconcile *karmavāda* with the new theory of knowledge leading to the emergence of the concept of *jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda*; some held on to the old belief with only slight modification: karman doubtless determines the future but were not sacrificial acts the most righteous acts? Further, the theory of karman tended to make gods subject to this inflexible law; some were now looked upon even as executive functionaries towards the operation of the law of karman. And lastly, it changed the conception of immortality from that of perpetual afterlife i.e. the unending continuation of this-life (which shares the features of all empirical existence) to that of eternal being or the absolute transcendence of empirical existence. To realize immortality of this type one has to know the true nature of his self, to turn back from this world.[2]

However, the Upanishadic thinkers diluted the operation of the law of karman in several ways. Firstly, the later Upanishads which have a pronouncedly theistic orientation exalt the conception of grace. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* states that the *ātman* is attained not by intellectual or scholastic profundity but by divine grace. It is apparently inconsistent with the doctrine of karman which postulates the possibility of emancipation only through one's own efforts. In the Paurāṇika Hinduism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Christianity and Islam there is the acceptance of the notion of grace but Jainism and early Buddhism emphatically repudiate it. Secondly, sometimes the Upanishads propound the view that the son takes over the actions of the father.[3] Such an assumption apparently goes against the operation of the law of karman. Thirdly, in some of the Upanishads it is said that the last thoughts of a man determine his future station.[4] This view is also contained in the *Gītā*. The later

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 286 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 287–90.
[3] *Bṛ. Upa.*, 1.5.17; *Kaushītaki*, II. 15.
[4] *Chhāndogya*, 3.14.1; *Praśna*, 3.10; *Bṛ. Upa.*, 4.5.5.

theistic Bhakti literature also advises that in the last moments a man should keep his mind and soul attuned to his *Ishṭadevatā*. All these ideas created distraction from strict adherence to moral determinism.

In the period subsequent to the Upanishads, the doctrine of karman acquired immense significance. Buddha's contemporaries held a variety of views on the subject of the origin of dukkha. The most important of these was the theory of karman held by the Buddha himself, Mahāvīra and the philosophers of some other Śramaṇa sects. In spite of his anattavāda the Buddha agreed with the Upanishadic thinkers about the transmission of the effects of one's karmans from one life to another. The Nikāyas often depict the Buddha as preaching this doctrine. At the time of Enlightenment he is said to have had three visions. In the second vision "he saw the whole universe as a system of karman and reincarnation, composed of beings noble or mean, happy or unhappy, continually passing away according to their deeds, leaving one form of existence and taking shape in another."[1] He taught the momentous vitality and significance of the law of karman with such fervour that it has been said that he almost put it in place of the Upanishadic Brahman.

According to early Buddhism the essence of karman is will,[2] and the most important type of karman is the voluntary mental act—through association with which alone do speech and physical action become karman. Karmans originate in will and are destroyed through will.[3] This makes the Buddhist view of karman basically different from that of the Jainas who regarded karman as a substance rather than as a function.[4] In Buddhism there are two types of karmans *sāsrava* and *anāsrava*. The sāsrava karmans are those which bring about good and bad consequences. On the other hand meditation on the Four Noble Truths, which leads to *Arhathood*, is an anāsrava karman; it does not generate good or evil consequences.

The Buddha divided karmans into three categories : those which

[1]Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

[2]Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Man as Willer', *Buddhist Studies*, ed. by B. C. Law, Calcutta, 1931, p. 587.

[3]*Origins*, p. 430.

[4]In early Buddhist literature is also found a popular version of the kamma theory which gives expression to the principle of moral retribution operative beyond life.

produce fruit (i) in this life; (ii) in the next life, and (iii) in a future life. It is by the elimination and neutralisation of karmans that a person attains full emancipation. Self-exertion is the only means of Nirvāṇa, and by self- exertion the Buddha meant performance of certain karmans, moral and spiritual. Thus the greatest emphasis was laid on one's acts and exertion and non-dependence on a superior power or on any ritual and ceremony.[1]

The Middle Way : Buddhist Ethics

For the Way to Nirvāṇa the *Vinaya* uses two terms, *paṭipadā* (*prati-padā*) and *maggo* (*mārga*) side by side.[2] Mrs. Rhys Davids feels that the latter was the original term preferred and used by the Buddha.[3] In brief, the Way is the Middle Way (*majjhima paṭipadā* or *majjhima maggo*) consisting in the avoidance of the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. In juxtaposition to the three stages in the process of the origination of sorrow, namely ignorance (*avijjā*), desire (*taṇhā*) and immoral actions (*karman*), Buddhism postulated three stages of the Way leading to the end of sorrow. Its first stage consists in the practice of virtue and the avoidance of sin (*sīla*). Then comes the practice of *jhāna* or *dhyāna* or contemplation (*samādhi*). And finally comes the attainment of knowledge or intuition of Truth (*paññā* or *prajñā*). Sometimes (as in the *Mahāvagga*) the scheme is made four-stepped through the addition of *vimutti*, or it is made five-fold through the further addition of *vimutti-ñāṇadassana*. However, these two contribute nothing important to the formula as they are not distinguishable from *paññā*.[4]

As pointed out by Prof. G. C. Pande, it will be a mistake to suppose that the Buddha preached the Way in the form of a neat and precise formula. According to him like Jesus, Gautama provided his followers with parables and exhortations. The Dhamma which he left behind was an inspiration, not a detailed handbook. He knew that treading the spiritual path is not a mechanical and for-

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 241 f.; cf. Bhikshu, Rashtrapala, 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Kamma', *World Buddhism*, XII, No. 6, pp. 3-5; cf. also Narada, Thera, 'Kamma, or the Buddhist Theory of Causation', *B. C. Law Volume*, II, pp. 158–175.

[2]Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 76; also see his *Development of Buddhist Ethics*, New Delhi, 1984.

[3]*Gotama the Man*, p. 41.

[4]Mishra, *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 76 f.

mal exercise. His followers however naturally sought to interpret the Dhamma intellectually and 'create the Abhidhamma out of it'. "The Buddha pointed to the moon of Truth: his followers were often content to seize the finger."[1]

The negative aspects of the Middle Way are more or less clear. Vedic rituals, other external sacrifices and the worship of nature-deities were opposed by the Buddha. Similarly he opposed the extreme austerities advocated by the Jainas and the Ājīvikas. He himself appears to have taught a 'Jhānic' or contemplative way. However, the precise determination of the Way he taught is rather difficult.

According to the traditional view, the three sections of the Way, *sīla*,[2] *samādhi* and *paññā* were divided into eightfold path (Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo) by the Buddha himself. The Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo consists of *sammā-vāchā, sammā-kammānta sammā-ājīva, sammā-vāyāma, sammā-sati, sammā-saṅkappa, sammā-diṭṭhi* and *sammā-samādhi. Sammā-vācha* is refraining from speaking falsehood, malicious words, and harsh and frivolous talk; *sammā-kammānta* is refraining from killing,[3] stealing and misconduct; *sammā-ājīva* is refraining from earning livelihood by improper means; *sammā-vāyāma* is effort or exertion to remove the existing evil thoughts: *sammā-sati* is mindfulness (*smṛti*) of all that is happening within the body and mind including feelings; *sammā-saṅkappa* means resolution for renunciation, and also for refraining from hatred and injury to other beings; *sammā-diṭṭhi* means comprehension of the right metaphysical views about the nature of things as propounded by the Buddha (such as the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the Pratītyasamutpāda); and *sammā-samādhi* means four stages of contemplation (*jhāna*) which lead to the attainment of perfect concentration. The first *jhāna* results in the attainment of joy. The second *jhāna* leads to inner peace and silence. By the third *jhāna* one is able to neutralize all his passions, false suppositions and assumptions. The fourth and final *jhāna* results in the attainment of perfect tranquillity and spotless calm.[1]

[1] *Origins*, p. 514.

[2] Soni, Sujata, 'Place of Śīla in Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIII, No. 5, p. 137 f.

[3] Vide Khantipalo, Bhikkhu, 'Buddhism, Ahiṁsā and Tolerance', *Aryan Path*, XXXIV, No. 4, pp. 180–3.

[4] Cf. Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Dhyāna in Early Buddhism', *IHQ*, III, pp. 689–715.

The Aṭṭhāngiko Maggo or Ashṭāngika Mārga as described above deals with all the aspects of spiritual life namely moral, mental and intellectual. In the *Magga Saṁyutta* it is described as the spiritual guide (*kalyānamitta*) and is shown as bestowing all the spiritual benefits that a Buddhist seeker of truth may desire to have. After giving up asceticism, Gautama had fallen back on his childhood experience of Jhāna or Dhyāna, and it was that which led him to Enlightenment. It was therefore only natural that Jhāna played a prominent part in his teachings. He is more than once described as jhāyin.[1] In several descriptions of the Way, Jhāna is accorded the chief place. His prominent disciples are praised for their ability in Jhāna. Jhāna was essentially a method of mental discipline which could be utilized for a diversity of purposes– for attaining to this or that divine world, for the sake of supernormal powers, for the sake of enjoyable experience, for communion with the true self or the inner reality.[2] In the case of the Buddha it served as a footstep to the realization of higher learning (*vijjā*) culminating in Enlightenment. Normally the *chitta* is covered over with impurities, and is distracted and unsteady. Jhāna serves a cathartic function. It renders the *chitta* pure and receptive which sets the stage for Enlightenment.[3]

It is sometimes believed that the Ashṭāngika Mārga represents an original teaching of the Buddha. Many passages from the Nikāyas, the most important occurring in the first Sermon (*supra*), are quoted in support of this view. But Mrs. Rhys Davids feels that it was the result of later systematization.[4] In some apparently early passages the Way is spoken of without any reference to its eightfold character. According to G. C. Pande also had the Buddha himself taught the Ashṭāngika Mārga then,[5] in view of the later fame of the idea, a more positive proof of it would have been preserved. "In fact it would not seem wise", he opines, "to attribute the formula of the eightfold path to Buddha himself in the absence of more convincing evidence. It is probable that he spoke only of the middle way between the two extremes of sense-pleasures (Kāma

[1]*Origins*, p. 529 f.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 531.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 532.
[4]Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Original Gospel*, p. 60
[5]*Origins*, pp. 517 ff.

sukha) and austerities (Attakilamatho), while it 'crystallized' as eightfold later."[1]

Besides the Aryan Eightfold Path, the early Buddhist texts refer to another moral path—that of the four *Brahmavihāras* of *Maitrī*, *Karuṇā*, *Muditā* and *Upekshā*. *Maitrī* or *mettā* includes both non-hatred and loving kindness. Hatred cannot be overcome by hatred; it can be overcome only by non-hatred. *Karuṇā* signifies a feeling of universal compassion, a sympathetic identity with all living beings. The Indian mind has always regarded the Buddha as a personification of universal compassion. *Muditā* or cheerfulness is also a moral virtue. The fourth Brahmavihāra namely *Upekshā* stresses the cultivation of utter non-attachment to the ills, pains, pleasures and tragedies of the world. Upekshā is the feature of the man of vision who refuses to be enchanted by the allurements of the eternally changing world.

Concept of Nirvāṇa

Nibbāna or nirvāṇa is regarded as the *summum bonum* for a Buddhist. Its nature as taught by the Buddha has been a subject of controversy from ancient times. It has been variously interpreted in the ancient texts and by modern scholars.[2] When in the light of the later developed philosophic thought the original sayings of the Buddha did not appear to be sufficiently precise, the Buddhist scholars interpreted them in the light of their own philosophical assumptions, just as the later Vedāntin scholars interpreted the *Upanishads*, the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtras* (*Prasthāna trayī*) in the light of their own philosophical ideas.[3]

Etymologically nirvāṇa may mean three things: Firstly, it may mean cooling, which, metaphorically, indicates the cooling of the cravings and passions. Secondly, it may mean stillness produced by the absence of wind—*nirvāṇa avāte*. Thirdly, it may signify the extinction of the psycho-physical complex—*nāmarūpa-skandha*—which is regarded as responsible for pain and sorrow.[4]

There are several possible interpretations of the concept of nirvāṇa and for each one of them some support can be obtained from

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 518.

[2] For a critical analysis of various views of modern scholars vide Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 451–56.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 443 f.

[4] Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 108.

the early Buddhist texts. (i) At the primary level, nirvāṇa means the extinction of pain and sorrow. However, it does not and cannot mean negation of all feelings because Buddha's heart is said to have been full of deep compassion (*karuṇā*) and love. (ii) At a more philosophical level, nirvāṇa means the extinction of the empirical phenomena. (iii) A third implication of nirvāṇa mentioned in some parts of the Buddhistic literature and later developed by the Sautrāntikas is absolute extinction or total nihil. (iv) A fourth significance of nirvāṇa is the implication of the being of an absolute real. This interpretation was later developed in the *tathatā* philosophy of Aśvaghosha. There nirvāṇa is identified with the real being of an Absolute. A few passages of the Tripiṭaka texts possibly refer to this interpretation.

The Buddha himself deliberately avoided any positive answer to the question: what is nibbāna? He regarded it as beyond any discussion (*atarkāvachara*) *avyākṛta* or *akathanīya*. Various explanations are given as to why the Buddha did not give any answer to this question (p. 153 f.). There is no proof in support of Stcherbatsky's view that it was a custom in Buddha's time to remain silent when one wanted to answer a question negatively.[1] Similarly, the suggestion of Keith and Poussin[2] that the Buddha did not know the answer himself is, to say the least, uncharitable. The best explanation[3] seems to be that the Buddha realized that a metaphysical discussion of nirvāṇa is not only irrelevant but also a hindrance in its practical realization. He knew that nirvāṇa is inconceivable, inexpressible, and so deep and subtle that it could not be communicated by one person to another; it could be realized by one within one's own self.[4] He advised the Pañchavaggiya monks to realize the Truth by themselves (*sañam abhiññā*) through proper training.[5]

But in spite of the inconceivability of nirvāṇa there are passages in the early texts which attempt to describe its negative and positive attributes. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* nibbāna is described as unborn,

[1] *Origins*, p. 506.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 505.

[3] Cf. Schrader, F. C., 'On the Problem of Nirvāṇa', *Journal of Pali Text Society*, 1904-5.

[4] Cf. Swami Tapasyananda, 'Buddha's Answers to the Great Questions of Life' (*Vedānta Kesarī*, LII, No. 1, pp. 18-24) who argues that Buddha's wisdom had only one term of reference and that is nirvāṇa.

[5] Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 75, n. 199.

unoriginated, unconstituted, undecaying, undying, free from diseases, grief and impurities, and the highest perfection achievable by the best exertion. "The question of origin or non-origin does not arise in the case of Nibbāna, because it is firm, eternal and changeless."[1] In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* also nibbāna is described as unconstituted, undying, true, going across, undecaying, firm, signless, inexpressible, calm, quiet, excellent and a place without fall and as the dhamma, the form, location, age and measure of which cannot be described.[2]

According to the *Mahāvagga* the truth or dhamma realized by the Buddha at the time of Enlightenment consisted of the paṭichcha-samuppāda and nibbāna, respectively the non-ultimate and ultimate experiences. The same text answers this question by saying that after the attainment of nibbāna all *saṁkhāras* cease to operate, all *upādhis* are left far behind, all desires are destroyed, even the desire of nirvāṇa.[3] It is thus cessation of suffering as feeling as well as of its cause. It is not a state of total nihil or annihilation or nothingness; according to the *Mahāvagga* it is a state of positive bliss (*vimutti sukha* or *parama sukha*).[4] It instantly reminds one of the Upanishadic *ānanda*, a characteristic of Brahman. In the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* it is stated that the theras and therīs relished the bliss of nirvāṇa. In the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* it is said that the spirit of the Buddha passed "from one state of ecstasy to another up and down through the stages of rapture until he passed into nirvāṇa." At another place the *Dīgha Nikāya* states that the nirvāṇa is the beginning point of all mundane phenomena and the worldly elements are dissolved in that. In the *Sutta Nipāta* it is said—*amṛtaṁ śāntaṁ nirvāṇaṁ padamachyutaṁ*. Another verse of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* refers to it as *sudurdarśaṁ, ajaraṁ, dhruvaṁ, nishprapañchaṁ, amṛtaṁ, śivaṁ*. Here the word nirvāṇa seems to be substituted for the word Brahman. It is tantamount to śāśvatavāda or eternalism, which the Buddha is supposed to have been so anxious to avoid.[6]

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 281.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 282.
[3]Conze, E., *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 67.
[4]Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Poussin, *IHQ*, IV, p. 347; *ERE*, IX, p. 376.
[5]Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p. 202; cf. Obermiller, E., 'The Account of Buddha's Nirvāṇa', *IHQ*, VIII, pp. 781–84.
[6]Varma, *op. cit.*, pp. 252–55.

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* texts also contain some aspects of the metaphysics of nirvāṇa. According to the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Abhidharmakosha* nirvāṇa is *lokottara*, eternal and blissful. In the *Dhammasaṅgiṇī* also nirvāṇa is not utter extinction or absolute nihil; it is at least partly positive. In it there is a stress on the indescribability of the state of nirvāṇa; its negative descriptions have been applied in virtue of its transcendence.[1] In several other Pāli texts nibbāna is equated with infinite consciousness (*viññāna*). According to a simile commonly used nibbāna is like a vast ocean which does not show any increase or decrease, however much water (in the form of countless arhats) may flow into it. According to Nāgasena nibbāna is like the invisible air the existence of which is only felt by the body of a common man. The fact that it is perceived by the arhats in the present life proves its reality. Just as a blind man sees the sun the moment this blindness is cured, nibbāna is visualized by the arhat as soon as he develops eyes of knowledge. Nirvāṇa is not a state or an object to be attained. It is not produced by the eight-fold path or *sādhanā*. It is ever-existent and comes to an exerting person as a flash of light. In the *Milindapañho*, nibbāna is considered to be something positive, non-temporally eternal and supremely beatific. It can be experienced, though not described.[2] Buddhaghosha strongly opposes the view that nibbāna is a mere absence or annihilation of the passions etc. According to Anuruddhāchāriya, nibbāna is eternal, transcendental, supreme, realizable and unique. Thus the Theravādins consistently held nibbāna to be positive, experienceable, indescribable and supreme—the most worthwhile.[3] The Vaibhāshikas regarded nirvāṇa as real and eternal. Only the Sautrāntikas generally believed in the purely negative character of Nirvāṇa, though they also generally admit the survival of a subtle spiritual consciousness. The Brāhmaṇical tradition and many European scholars have described them as utter nihilists, but most of the Japanese scholars oppose such a view. Stcherbatsky has also opined that Śūnyatā meant only the relativity of individual things and ideas. According to Nāgārjuna the Buddha kept silence on the question of nirvāṇa because "the asked for determinations were inapplicable. Thus Nirvāṇa cannot be non-existence, else it will cease to be uncaused and unconditioned. It cannot be existence for the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 258 f.
[2] Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 445.
[3] *Ibid.*

same reason. It cannot be both because both are conditioned (Saṅskṛta) while Nirvāṇa is unconditioned (Asaṅskṛta). To call Nirvāṇa neither existence nor non-existence will be tantamount to speaking the unspeakable. It is just the quiescence of all phenomena (Prapañcopaśamaḥ) and utterly well (Śivaḥ)."[1]

The attainment of nirvāṇa makes one different from ordinary mortals. He becomes omniscient, all-enlightened, and released; he remains unpolluted by everything and enjoys perfect calm. He is not attached to anything in the world as a lotus flower is not affected by the water upon which it floats. He leaves evil, and virtues become useless for him like a raft which is forsaken by one who has crossed the river. He acquires true insight into the *dhamma*, attains *ñāṇa*, *paññā*, *vijjā* and *āloka*. The *paññā* of a Buddha is intuitive and synoptic and he realizes it himself (*sañaṁ abhiññā*) because the ultimate truth is beyond logic (*atakko*).[2]

It is unlikely that originally any distinction between the Buddha and the Arhat was conceived. The attainment of the state of the Arhat was the same as the culminating realisation of the state of nirvāṇa. However, later on a distinction came to be affected between the two. There are indications in the Buddhist literature that the state of the Tathāgata was regarded as superior to the state of the Arhat. The Hīnayānist Arhats themselves admitted that they had not become Buddhas, probably to indicate the super-eminent position of the founder of their religion.

The attainment of the state of the Arhat or of nirvāṇa does not mean absolute withdrawal from the active world. The early Buddhist literature categorically states that the Buddha had attained nirvāṇa in his life time. Hence it follows that even after the attainment of the state of nirvāṇa, a life of dynamic energy and action is possible. That is why a distinction was conceived between nirvāṇa and parinirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa means the withering away of pain and sorrow. Parinirvāṇa means the state of Buddhahood after the disintegration of the physical body elements of the Arhat.

On the metaphysical relation of nibbāna and saṁsāra there is little evidence in the early texts. However, it is repeatedly said that nirvāṇa implies the stoppage of the wheel of rebirth. The *Sutta Nipāta* refers to nirvāṇa as the end of the wheel of birth and death.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 450 f.

[2] The gāthā uttered by the Buddha to the Ājīvika Upaka contains a number of descriptive epithets of one who has attained nibbāna (Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 74).

Nibbāna is the ultimately sought for end, the most worthwhile. It is the goal of the spiritual pilgrimage, that where one finally goes beyond all sorrows. It is the safe 'other bank'. In nibbāna not only does saṁsāra cease, there also takes place an emancipation from it. This freedom rests in nibbāna i.e. to be freed from saṁsāra is to rest in nibbāna.[1]

Thus we observe that with the possible exception of the Sautrāntikas hardly ever did the Buddhists regard nirvāṇa as total nihil. Further, there is a complete unanimity among the various schools of Buddhism about the unconditioned nature of nirvāṇa. It is beyond the pale of causes and conditions. They also agree that it is inexpressible; it can only be intuitively comprehended. Finally, it is unanimously accepted that nirvāṇa is the ultimate good, the end of all restlessness and striving.

The weight of modern scholarly opinion is also against regarding the Buddha as agnostic or nihilist. Poussin argues that nirvāṇa could be regarded either as immortality or as annihilation or as cessation of pain. The first he considered as impossible, the second as logically following from the doctrine of no-soulism and third as the actual attitude of the Buddha. Some others have also attributed utter nihilism to the Buddha. However Oldenberg believed that there are some texts which suggest that the silence of the Buddha was due to the indescribable character of nirvāṇa. Mrs. Rhys Davids, Schrader and Radhakrishnan appeal to forcible *a priori* considerations against regarding the Buddha an agnostic or nihilist. Barua also repudiates the negative concept of nirvāṇa.[2] According to G. C. Pande the evidence of the Buddhist texts "cumulatively suggests an Absolutist position and supports the Mādhyamika interpretation. And this is hardly surprising since already before the Buddha Absolutism is in unmistakable terms expressed in the Upaniṣads."[3] Many other scholars have expressed their agreement with a non-annihilationist interpretation of nirvāṇa. According to Mahā Thera Nārada "To say that Nibbāna is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with five senses is illogical."[4] According-

[1]*Origins*, p. 482.

[2]For a detailed discussion on and assessment of these views, see Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 451–56.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 509.

[4]Nārada, Mahāthera, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 71, No. 5, pp. 74–83; cf. also Pandita Sudharma, 'How Positive is Nirvāṇa', *Ceylon Today*, XII, No. 4, p. 30 ff.

ing to Conze nirvāṇa is obviously transcendental and uncognizable by logical thought. According to Wilbon G. Richard one cannot insist that nirvāṇa for the Buddhists was ever only bliss or annihilation.[1] Sadhatissa opines that nirvāṇa was regarded as the highest happiness.[2] Moni Bagchi[3] thinks that what the Buddha meant by nirvāṇa is limitless, permanent, eternal, positive and immutable consciousness.

N. Dutt has divided Buddha's discourses on nibbāna into three categories. In the discourses of the first category nirvāṇa is described as a negative ethical concept. In them "it is the end of desire or thirst for worldly objects or existences; it is the eradication of attachment (*rāga*), ill-will (*dveśa*) and delusion (*moha*); it is the removal of all impurities (*kleśas* and *āsravas*) by meditational and other practices; it is the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*); it is an end of repeated existences; it is the cessation of all thought-constructions (*vikalpa*); it is the absence of worldly attributes (*upādhi*); it is not associated with happiness or unhappiness or indifference; it is non-mental; it has no basis, no cause."[4] In the discourses of the second category nirvāṇa is described as a positive ethical concept. Here it "is perfection in *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, i.e. the eightfold path; it is realised by exertion (*tapas*), purity (*brahmacarya*) and comprehension of the four truths; it is perfection in four *smṛtyupasthāna* (mindfulness) practices; it is arhathood, it is peace and quietude; it is the place from which there is no fall; it is deathless, the place of bliss and perfect passionlessness."[5] In the discourses of the third category nirvāṇa is regarded as a metaphysical concept. Here it is "eternal and fixed and beyond the scope of discursive and discriminatory thoughts. It is homogeneous. It has neither origin nor decay. It is without past, present or future. It is unlimited and unsurpassable, unfathomable and immeasurable. It is unconditional and unconstituted (*asaṁskṛta*) ... It is supramundane (*lokottara*) and beyond the three spheres of existence, Kāma, Rūpa and Arūpa

[1]Wilbon, G. R., 'On Understanding the Buddhist Nirvāṇa', *History of Religion*, V, No. 2, pp. 300–26.

[2]Saddhatissa, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 3–4, pp. 34–39; cf. Bhikshu Rashtrapala, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, 72, No. 5, pp. 138–40.

[3]Moni Bagchi, 'The Conception of Nirvāṇa', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 7–8, pp. 161–4.

[4]Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 293–4.

(*apariyāpanna*). It is beyond the fourfold propositions, i.e. it cannot be said to exist, not exist or both exist and not exist, or neither exist nor not exist."[1] How close it is to the Upanishadic concept of Brahma.

As on his death the Buddha was like a flame blown out by the wind, he could do no more for his disciples; he therefore urged them to take the *dhamma* for their refuse (*śaraṇa*). This tradition appears to be authentic though, as pointed out by Basham, doubt remains that the passage was inserted to counter Buddholatrous tendencies. At any rate it tends to make the *triśaraṇa* formula—the Buddhist confession of faith (I go for refuge to the Buddha; I go for refuge to the Doctrine; I go for refuge to the Order) meaningless though the antiquity of the formula can hardly be doubted for it is frequently mentioned in the canon and occurs in the Bhabru edict of Aśoka !

The Avyākatā Pañhā (Unanswered Questions)

Lastly, we may discuss collectively the problem of the questions which were not answered by the Buddha. The ten unanswered questions (*avyākatā pañhā*) on which he is either silent or brushes them aside are : 1. The world is eternal; 2. The world is not eternal; 3. The world is finite; 4. The world is infinite; 5. The soul is identical with the body; 6. The soul is different from the body; 7. The liberated one exists after death; 8. The liberated one does not exist after death; 9. The liberated one does or does not exist after death; and 10. The liberated one neither exists nor does not exist after death. Of these the first two questions are related with the duration of the world, the next two are related to the extent of the world, fifth and sixth are regarding identity and difference between soul and body and the last four are concerned with the existence and non-existence of a liberated saint after death. According to A. B. Keith, A. J. Bahm and many others, the Buddha kept mum on these questions because he did not have a clear knowledge of reality. Keith says: "It is quite legitimate to hold that Buddha was a genuine agnostic and that he had no reasoned or other conviction on the matter."[2] Bahm also credits the Buddha for recognising the limits of knowledge.[3] Similarly Jacobi is of opinion that the Buddha was influenced by contem-

[1]*Ibid.*, p. 294.
[2]Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon*, p. 63.
[3]Bahm, A.J., *Philosophy of the Buddha*, p. 27.

porary agnosticism. He finds in the Buddha an element of agnosticism analogous to that of Sañjaya.[1] But this view does not find support from the *Tripiṭaka*, for these texts clearly ascribe omniscience to the Buddha. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* the Buddha himself says: "O monks! what I know and have not taught is greater and what I have taught is very little." Several other passages of Pali canon describe the Buddha as all-knowing (*Sabbavidum*) and having the highest wisdom. It is true that he recognised the limits of normal conceptual knowledge but he does not consider such knowledge to consitute the limits of human understanding. He speaks of non-conceptual knowledge beyond reason (*attakavāchаro*). Jacobi is apparently wrong in holding the view that Buddha was influenced by the contemporary agnostics. The Buddha neither deliberately adopted the agnostic method nor his intention was to win the people over to his side, as Jacobi believes. Jacobi appears to have wrongly put Buddha's silence and Sañjaya's agnosticsm at a par. The views of Sañjaya were based on his 'ignorance' and 'stupidity' while the views of the Buddha were based on his direct experience of the highest state.

It is also possible that the Buddha set aside those metaphysical questions due to pragmatic considerations. For him suffering was the main problem and the task before the mankind was how to uproot it. To hold discussion on god, world, soul, life, etc. appeared to him foolishness. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* he uses the parable of arrow to explain this point. He points out that the need of the man pierced with a poisoned arrow is to get rid of it and be cured rather than to wait for a fruitless investigation about the nature of the arrow and the person who shot it. At the end he clearly says "It is not useful... not conducive to detachment ... higher knowledge, Enlightenment and Nibbāna. Therefore this has not been answered by me." In the *Abhayarājakumāra sutta* also he emphasises that he does not assert useless truths; he asserts only those truths which are useful. This clearly shows the pragmatic consideration of the Buddha for setting aside these questions. That is why Radhakrishnan has opined that the Buddha taught from motives of expediency.

According to a third suggestion, put forward by Prof. Murti, the Buddha kept silence on metaphysical questions because he realized that the capacity of human mind is limited. Due to his rational agnosticism he kept mum specially on the first four questions re-

[1]Jacobi, *SEB*, vol. 45, p. xxix.

lating to the duration and extent of the world.

K.N. Upadhyaya is also of opinion that "Buddha set aside the questions pertaining to the duration of the world on account of their intellectual incomprehensibility with the motive of expediency."[1]

According to another view Buddha set aside the last six questions because they are meaningless and inappropriate. Of these six questions the first two refer to the identity and difference between the soul and body and the last four are concerned with the existence and non-existence of the Tathāgata after death. We cannot verify the existence of Tathāgata after death. The Buddha himself explained it to Vachchha Gota by the simile of fire. He asked Vachchha: "If fire in front of you were to go out, would you know this fire in front of you has gone out ?" Vachchha answered this in affirmative. The Buddha further asked him: "this fire in front of you which has gone out in which direction has it gone, eastern, western, northern or southern ?" Vachchha answered: "It does not fit the case". At this the Buddha pointed out: "*In the same way, O Vachchha . . .* it does not fit the case." Thus, he showed that the last four questions pertaining to existence and non-existence of the Tathāgata could not be verified.

The fifth and sixth questions also, relating to identify and difference of the soul and body, cannot be tested through any empirical sources. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* Vachchha Gota pointedly asked the Buddha whether 'the self is' or 'self is not'. But the Buddha remained silent. After his departure Ānanda asked the Buddha the reason of his silence. Buddha replied that if he had asserted the former, Vachchha Gota would had taken him to mean that he accepted the Sassatavāda (eternalism) and in the case of the latter he would had confused it with Uchchhedavāda (annihilationism). The first would had gone against the basic teaching of Buddhism that all things are soulless (*Sabbe dhammā anattāti*), and second one would had caused further delusion to the already deluded Vachchha Gota. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* the Buddha has clearly explained to Anurādha the impropriety of the question of existence or non-existence of Tathāgatha, who is beyond the mark of the five aspects of personality. He asked Anurādha, whether she cognized (*samānupassati*) the Tathāgata as the five aggregates, included within the five aggregates, possessing the five aggregates or including the five aggregates. Anurādha answered in negative. Buddha then pointed out that because the

[1] *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 295.

Tathāgata is undiscoverable in terms of any of the cognizable elements it is not proper to answer whether the Tathāgata exists, does not exist or both or neither. Thus, the Buddha showed that the questions themselves are inappropriate or meaningless with regards to the Tathāgata.[1]

Thus besides pragmatic considerations there are two other reasons which may be said to be chiefly responsible for the silence of the Buddha with regard to the ten metaphysical questions. The parable of arrow shows that the Buddha brushed aside those questions because they lacked any practical and pragmatic value. But there were other reasons also due to which he kept mum with regard to these questions. He remained silent on questions no. 1–4 which deal with the duration and extent of the world because people are intellectually incapable to comprehend their answer while questions 5–10, which relate to identity and difference of the body and soul and existence and non-existence of the Tathāgata after death, were set aside by him because they are irrelevant, meaningless or inappropriate.

[1]Cf. Shrivastava, A.K., 'Nature and Significance of the Silence of Buddha', in *History and Culture* (B.P. Sinha Felicitation Volume), ed. by Bhagwant Sahai, Delhi, 1987, p. 398 ff.

Chapter 7

THE SAṄGHA

Emergence of the Buddhist Sangha

The Beginnings

"The great practical achievement of the Buddha", Charles Eliot observes, "was to found a religious order which has lasted to the present day. It is chiefly to this institution that the permanence of his religion is due." In the early stage of Buddhism, however, the disciples of the Buddha led a wandering life residing in caves and forests and living on alms. They were personally ordained by the Buddha with the words '*Ehi bikkhu*' (Come, O monk). After he had won over a number of adherents, in accordance with the custom of his age, he established a saṅgha. Some historians believe that before the First Council the Buddhist monks were very loosely differentiated from others as there was "merely a community of faith and spiritual alliance among them" and they lacked "any external bond of union." Yet there is a possibility that even at that time there existed a set of regulations to be observed by all the Buddhist monks. The custom of the recital of Pātimokkha twice a month must have started in the life-time of the Buddha. He is also known to have been very particular in keeping a distinction between his disciples and monks of other sects with regard to dress, alms-bowl, etc.

The story of the Buddhist saṅgha begins with the conversion of the so-called 'Pañchavargīya' bhikshus. When he had sixty disciples, he gave them the right to ordain new converts because it was difficult for him to attend personally upon each and every ordination. But with the increase in the membership of the Order, innumerable complexities also made their appearance in the monastic code. Hence onwards monastic rules were quite often modified and changed and, when necessary, new rules were formulated.

As we have seen, at first Buddha had used a very simple formula for ordination. It merely invited and welcomed the applicant to embrace his dharma. But in the ordination conducted by a bhikshu,

the 'Tisarana' or 'Triśaraṇa' formula was used. Further, one who desired admission had to shave his head and beard and put on yellow robes. Then he saluted the monks and repeated the Triśaraṇa formula thrice with folded hands. This was called the ordination (*pabajjā*, Sans. *pravrajyā*) ceremony. The new entrant was put, as it were, on probation. He was told in the very beginning about the Four Nissayas so that he could realize that in joining the Order he would have to face many physical discomforts. The rule requiring that parents should give their permission for the pabajjā of their son may be an old one framed at the request of Śuddhodana when Rāhula was ordained. The Buddha proscribed the ordination of men in royal service, of those suffering from serious diseases, of those who were declared to be thieves and jail-breakers and whose names were written in the royal house on the charge of theft, and of those who were castigated by whip and were branded as culprits, debtors and slaves.[1] On attaining the age of 20 a monk, if found fit, was given higher ordination (*upasampadā*).

When monasticism acquired roots, every *antevāsika* or junior monk was expected to select two persons as his *upādhyāya* and *āchārya* respectively. The *āchārya* officiated for the *upādhyāya* in the latter's absense and thus the monk was never left unrestrained in his behaviour. The ideal of relationship between the *upādhyāya* or *āchārya* and the *antevāsika* was to be that of father and son. The *antevāsika* had to do all the services for his *upādhyāya* and *āchārya*, while they were expected to see that the young monk had all the required articles and to attend upon him if he was ill.

It is said that the Buddha borrowed the custom of *uposathā* from the Brāhmaṇical society at the suggestion of Bimbisāra. In the beginning in the uposathā ceremony the main teachings of Buddha were repeated. Later on, it assumed the nature of a confessional ceremony. The list of the possible offences (*pātimokkha*) was repeated before the assembled monks and those guilty of any of these made a confession for which they were punished according to the nature of their guilt.[2]

Varshāvāsa commencing from the full moon of Āshāḍha or Śrāvaṇa was another custom commonly observed by the ascetics of Brāhmaṇa, Jaina and Buddhist faiths. During these three months

[1]Chakrabortty, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
[2]*Ibid.*

the monks stayed at one place and were fully dependent upon the gifts of the laity of that area, who very often came to hear religious discourses. Therefore the varshāvāsa came to serve as a link of close relationship between the saṅgha and the laity.

Pavāraṇā (Sans. *pravāraṇā*) ceremony was held at the expiry of the varshāvāsa period. It was, like the pātimokkha assembly, a confessional assembly. But there was a difference also, for unlike the pātimokkha, in the pavāraṇā pātimokkha rules were not recited to the monks to ask them if they had committed any of the listed offences; on the other hand in the pavāraṇā the monks themselves, in a very humble manner, requested the assembly to point out the sins that they might have unknowingly committed.[1] After the pavāraṇā the *kaṭhina* ceremony was held in which cotton cloth, provided by the laity and made up into robes, was distributed among the monks.

From the *Vinaya* it is clear that in the beginning the Buddhist monks observed strict rules regarding dress, etc. Besides three *chīvaras* of dull orange colour (an upper robe, a lower one and a sort of cloak) called saṅghāṭī, antaravāsaka and uttarāsaṅga, monks could use mantle, blanket, loin-cloth for the rainy season, bathing clothes, small cloths to be used in wounds, itches, eczema, etc., towels and bags. Alms-bowl was also a necessity for the monks. Among other permissible articles were needles, razors and nail-cutters, dusters to sweep the *āvāsa*, and some other things of general use.

The Buddha was usually invited along with his disciples by the lay-devotees for meals. Rules regarding food-taking were very liberal in Buddhism. A monk could generally take anything in alms but could not express his wish for any particular kind of food. Use of medicines was not prohibited.

After renouncing the world monks found themselves in a new society bound by a common faith and a common disciplinary code. The seniors commanded due respect and were given first preference with regard to seat, water or food. If a monk fell ill, he was duly attended by some member of the saṅgha. The co-residents of the *āvāsa* were the only relations of the monk and therefore the Buddha insisted upon mutual service. He also encouraged a healthy relation

[1]For a detailed discussion on the main Buddhist monastic ceremonies see Saha, K., 'Buddhist Ceremonies', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 39-45.

between society and the saṅgha. If a monk insulted a faithful householder, he became liable for punishment. A quarrelsome monk was penalized with such disabilities on account of which he immediately lost the right of conferring ordination.

Growth of Vinaya Rules

The increasing number of the monks and the custom of rain-retreat led to the emergence of monastic establishments (*vihāras*) which were supported by the gifts of the devoted laity in the form of buildings, money and material goods for the monks. Detailed rules were framed for the selection of the sites of monasteries and also about the size of their rooms. Larger vihāras had rooms for every purpose—service halls, store-houses, bath-rooms, etc. Ownership of monasteries was vested in the saṅgha. Later on vihāras acquired huge properties, both movable and immovable, and became very rich. Thus a fullfledged monasticism came into existence which explains the enormous number of Vinaya rules.

Literature on Monastic Discipline

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* comprises four texts—*Prātimoksha* (*Pātimokkha*), *Sūtra Vibhaṅga* (*Sutta Vibhaṅga*), *Skandhaka* (*Khandhakas*) and *Parivāra*. The *Pātimokkha* forms the nucleus of the Vinaya. According to some, however, it is not a canonical work in the strict sense of the term; at best it may be regarded as one of the para-canonical texts.[1] The *Karmavāchanās* also belong to the category of para-canonical texts. Among the non-canonical texts which throw light on the monastic discipline are included the Commentaries and some other miscellaneous texts. The most complete commentarial tradition has been preserved in the Theravādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin schools, written in Pali and Tibetan respectively. The Chinese translations of the Vinaya commentaries of almost all the major Hīnayāna schools are also available.[2] Then there are miscellaneous texts concerning the Vinaya rules, now mostly found in their Chinese version.[3]

[1]Prebish, Charles S., 'Vinaya and Prātimoksha: The Foundation of Buddhist Ethics', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, p. 223 ff.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]For references to literature on monastic discipline vide Hazime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism : a Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, Delhi, 1987, p. 50 ff.

The Monastic Discipline

Pātimokkha and its Rules

"The Buddhist Saṅgha", S. Dutt observes, "existed originally as a set of the Parivrājaka community of the sixth century B.C., and it rested on the basis of a common Dhamma and had at first no special Vinaya of its own. It is impossible to say at what point of time, but certainly very early in its history, the sect of the Buddha, the Cātuddisa Bhikkhu-sangha [Skt. Cāturdiśa-Bhikṣu-sangha], devised an external bond of union : it was called Pātimokkha."[1] The *Pātimokkha* gives a list of rules of monastic discipline together with atonement for transgressing them It originally contained 152 rules which were later extended to 227. These were recited by the monks at each uposathā day. 'This recitation served the double purpose of keeping the rules fresh in the minds of the monks and nuns, and of giving each member of the monastic community the opportunity, while the rules were being repeated or recited, to avow any offences that he or she had committed.'[2] For each breach of the rules, appropriate punishment is indicated. The monks' Pātimokkha contains the following eight categories of offences :[3]

(I) *Pārājika Dharmas*—These four offences are the most serious ones which can be committed by a monk. They are : (1) sexual intercourse, (2) theft, (3) deprivation of life (of a human), and (4) false proclamation of superhuman faculties. Violation of any one of the *pārājika dharmas* results in permanent expulsion from the saṅgha. (II) *Saṅghāvaśesha Dharmas*—After *pārājika dharmas* these thirteen offences represent the most severe breach of monastic discipline. Five offences deal with sexual transgressions, two with dwelling places, two with false accusation, two with schisms, one with a monk who is difficult to speak to, and one with monks who corrupt families. The first nine of these become offences at once, while the final four become offences after third admonition to the concerned monk. When a monk is culpable of a *saṅghāvaśeṣha* offence, he is subjected to a probationary period (*parivāsa*) for as many day as the offence was concealed. If the offence was confessed at once, the *parivāsa* period is reduced to nil. When the parivāsa is completed, a further period called mānatva must also be spent.

[1]Dutt, S., *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 72–3.
[2]Horner, I.B., *The Book of Discipline*, I, p. xii.
[3]For details vide, Charles S. Prebish, *loc. cit.*

(III) *Aniyata Dharmas*—These two offences include cases whereby a monk may be accused by a trustworthy female lay-follower. If a monk should sit together with a woman in a secret place which is convenient for sexual intercourse, he may be charged with either a *pārājika*, *saṅghāvaśesha* or *pāyantika* offence (see below). If a monk should sit together with a woman in a place unfit for indulging in sexual intercourse, but suitable for speaking to her in lewd words, he may be charged with a *saṅghāvaśesha* or *pāyantika* offence, the *pārājika* offence of unchastity having been ruled out.[1] (IV) *Niḥsargika-Pāyantika Dharmas*—There are thirty offences in this class, violation of which requires expiation. These are arranged in three vargas, or sections, of ten rules each. (1) Ten rules concerning robes. These refer to the length of time during which an extra robe might be kept. (2) Ten rules for the use of rugs and money. (3) Ten rules concerning bowl, medicine and robes. In all, sixteen of these rules refer to robes, five to rugs, four to money and appropriating saṅgha property, two to sheep's wool, two to bowls and one to medicines. (V) *Pāyantika Dharmas*—There are ninety offences in this category, violation of which require expiation. Of these seventy-four may be grouped under five major headings: (a) Moral rules (lying, etc.)—23 rules; (b) Conduct with women—14 rules; (c) Food and drink—16 rules; (d) Dharma, Vinaya, and their application—11 rules; (e) Use of requisites—10 rules. The remaining sixteen rules may be grouped under three headings, each containing a lesser number of items : (i) Behaviour in the vihāra—6 rules; (ii) Travel—5 rules; (iii) Various types of destruction—5 rules.[2] (VI) *Pratideśanīya Dharmas*—The *pratideśanīya* section contains four straight-forward offences which are to be confessed. They include : (1) partaking of food obtained through the intervention of a nun, (2) not reproving a nun for giving orders (pertaining to the meal) while a meal is being served, (3) accepting food from a family which is undergoing training, and (4) obtaining food while living in a dangerous setting, without having announced it being so beforehand (unless the monk is ill).[3] (VII) *Śaiksha Dharmas*—Pachow describes the *śaiksha dharmas* thus: 'The nature of these rules is essentially concerned with the daily conduct and decorum of the Bhikṣus such as : walking, moving to and fro, looking, dressing, contracting, and stretching

[1]Prebish, *op. cit.*
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*

and so forth. They do not come under any penal section inasmuch as there will not be any sanction or punishment for their breaches or violations. The violation of any of them by a Bhikṣu is not considered to be a criminal act but simply bad manners.'[1] (VIII) *Adhikaraṇa-Śamatha Dharmas*—These seven rules represent a system by which offences may be resolved.

These eight classes of rules comprise the monks' *Pātimokkha sutta*. The nuns' *Pātimokkha* consists of the same classes of rules, but the *aniyata* dharmas are omitted. But the number of rules in the nuns' *Pātimokkha* is considerably larger, many rules having been formulated specifically for females.

Suttavibhaṅga

The *Suttavibhaṅga* is a detailed analysis concerning the rules recorded in the *Pātimokkha*. It has the same eight sections as the Pātimokkha. Regarding each of the rules, the *Suttavibhaṅga* has a four-fold structure : 1. A story (or stories) explaining the circumstances under which the rule was pronounced; 2. The Pātimokkha rule; 3. A word for word commentary on the rule; and 4. Stories indicating mitigating circumstances in which exceptions to the rule or deviations in punishment might be made. Like the *Pātimokkha* there are both, a *Bhikshu Suttavibhaṅga* (sometimes referred to as *Mahāvibhaṅga*) and a *Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga*.

Skandhakas or Khandhakas

The *Skandhakas* or *Khandhakas* (-sections) contain the regulations partaining to the organization of the saṅgha. The *Skandhaka* functions on the basis of the acts and ceremonies dictated by the *Karmavāchanās*. The *Khandhakas* comprise two divisions, *Mahāvagga* (great section) and *Chullavagga* (smallar section) containing ten and twelve sections respectively. The last two sections of the *Chullavagga* contain an account of the first two Councils held at Rajagṛha and Vaiśālī and form rather an appendix of the *Chullavagga*.

The chapters of the *Mahāvagga* are the following : 1. *Pravrajyā*—It discusses, at length, admission into the order (*pravrajyā*), ordination to full monkhood (*upasaṁpadā*), the admission of novices (*śramaṇeras*), the regulations regarding the behaviour of a new monk toward his master (*upādhyāya*) or teacher (*āchārya*), and a résumé of the cases disqualifying one from admission into the order.

[1]Quoted by Prebish.

2. *Uposathā*—It discusses the monthly confession ceremony from its inception to its final form, and also outlines the rules connected with the Uposathā ceremony. The Uposathā ceremony was instituted on Bimbisāra's suggestion. At first, the ceremony was held on the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of every fortnight, but later on observance on the eighth was eliminated and the Buddha declared that the *Pātimokkha* should be recited at the Uposathā ceremony. Finally, many rules discuss how the confession ceremony is to be announced and the monks called together, how the Pātimokkha recitation should begin, how the Uposathā is to be kept up, the various kinds of confession ceremony, the procedure, atonement of offences, how to handle monks arriving while the ceremony is going on, and arrangements for avoiding any interruptions of the ceremony.[1] 3. *Varshāvāsa*—It deals with an account of the events leading up to the Buddha's decision to institute the system of making the monks spend the rainy season at a fixed residence. The period for varshāvāsa was fixed at three months, and a discussion on when to enter the rain-residence, acceptable and forbidden dwellings, and room and furniture distribution follows next. Conditions under which the varshāvāsa may be abandoned are carefully explained. Finally, the offences and non-offences are outlined in the case of a monk abandoning a rainy season residence (which the monk has promised a layman to inhabit).[2] 4. *Pravāraṇā*—This chapter treats the Pravāraṇā ceremony observed at the end of varshāvāsa. The ceremony was designed to prevent disharmony in the monastic community and involved each monk inviting other monks to state whether there is anything for which he should be reproved. Precise procedural rules for the ceremony are given, defining the preparations for the ceremony, how the ceremony is to begin, etc. Provisions are outlined for various kinds of Pravāraṇā ceremonies and how to carry out an abbreviated ceremony in case of danger. The method for making amends is outlined and it is emphasized that a monk may not participate in the ceremony without having done so. Finally, some exceptional cases, such as postponing the Pravāraṇā ceremony, are discussed.[3] 5. *Charma*—It deals with the usage of leather (and shoes in particular). 6. *Bhaishajya*—It discusses the rules concerning the foods and medicines allowed to the monks. With regard to food, the rules are

[1]Prebish, *op. cit.*
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*

severe, stating which alms foods may be accepted, how an invitation should be dealt with, how alms foods are to be prepared, and how the storeroom (*kalpikaśālā*) is to be used. A relaxation of these rules is permitted in case of hard times.[1] 7. *Chīvara*—It treats the rules regarding monks' clothing. Rules concerning which robes may and may not be worn, the cutting and sewing of the robes, the disfiguring of the robes, and the number of robes are given. Many rules regarding the distribution of clothing are outlined. The distribution of a deceased monk's requisites is also dealt with in detail. 8. *Kaṭhina*—This chapter sets forth rules concerning the manufacture and distribution of robes for the monks. 9. *Kosāmbaka*—It relates a dispute between two groups of monks in Kauśāmbī concerning the expulsion of a monk. 10. *Kamma*—It discusses acts carried out by the monastic community, emphasizing the various sorts of assemblies in the saṅgha and in which acts they are competent to function.

The first ten chapters of the *Chullavagga* discuss the following: 1. *Pāṇḍulohitaka*—This chapter outlines some monastic disciplinary measures. Five cases are mentioned. 2. *Pudgala*—It discusses the treatment of simple offences. The *parivāsa* and *mānatva* (*manatta*) probations are outlined, as well as the reinstatement ceremony (*āvarhaṇa*). 3. *Pārivāsika*—It outlines the standards of behaviour to be observed during the *parivāsa* and *mānatva* periods. 4. *Uposathāsthāpana*—This chapter discusses the prohibiting of a monk from participating in the Uposathā ceremony. 5. *Śamatha*—It outlines the procedures for the resolution of legal questions (*adhikaraṇas*). 6. *Saṅghabheda*—It discusses schisms in the saṅgha. The Devadatta legend occupies a large portion of this chapter. It relates that after entering the order Devadatta obtained great powers, and gained the support of Prince Ajātaśatru. He enjoined the Buddha to leave the saṅgha under his direction (after Buddha's death). After being denied, he tried to found his own community. Thereupon he obtained the help of Ajātaśatru to replace Bimbisāra as king and exterminate the Buddha. Ajātaśatru agreed and set himself up as king in place of his father Bimbisāra. Devadatta sent men to murder the Buddha, but the Buddha converted them. Then he attempted to kill the Buddha with a rock, but only succeeded in wounding his foot. He then sent a mad elephant against the Buddha, but the elephant was tamed by the Buddha. Then Devadatta posed more stringent rules and lured five hundered monks away from the Buddha,

[1]*Ibid.*

actually founding a new community. But Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana led the five hundred monks back into the Buddha's fold. When Devadatta learnt of this, he vomitted blood and died.

Following the Devadatta legend, there is a general discussion of schisms in the saṅgha. 7. *Śayanāsana*—It concerns the dwellings of the saṅgha. After an introductory story relating the building of dwellings for the saṅgha by a householder in Rājagṛha, the legend of Anāthapiṇḍika, a wealthy merchant in Śrāvastī, who presented Jetavana to the saṅgha, is narrated. Various abuses led the Buddha to allow a monk to be put in charge of assigning dwellings and furniture to other monks. Some monks were given administrative roles, such as superintendence of buildings or distribution of clothes. Provisions were also made to avoid the decay of donated buildings by assigning a monk to dwell in each permanently. 8. *Āchāra*—This chapter gives miscellaneous rules. Behaviour with regard to alms begging, meals among the laity, newly arrived monks and forests dwelling monks, etc. is outlined. 9. *Kshudraka*—It is an inventory of rules which are of minor impoitance, and by their nature..could not be appropriately placed elsewhere. Such topics as toothpicks and bathroom furniture are discussed. 10. *Bhikshuṇīvāstu*—It discusses rules designed specifically for nuns. At the beginning of the chapter, the story leading up to the admission of women into the saṅgha is related. The nuns' admission, confession and invitation ceremonies are discussed, as well as rules for conduct towards the male saṅgha members.

Parivāra

The *Parivāra* is the last book of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. It gives in question and answer form an abstract of other parts and is most likely a late composition of a Siṁhalese monk. It contains nineteen sections, indices, appendices, lists etc. It also provides interesting bits of monastic history.

Karmavāchanās

All transactions concerning the communal life of the saṅgha were settled by acts referred to as *Saṅghakarmas*. *Saṅghakarmas* could arise in either of two ways : (1) by a general requisition; (2) by a dispute. According to Jinānanda 'A formula, styled *karmavāchanā* (Pāli *kammavāchā*), was resorted to for performing saṃgha karmas. There are two forms of arriving at a resolution (i) a summary

decision (*Jñaptidvitīyakarma*) in which a resolution is arrived at by the first reading and (ii) a decision by the third reading (*Jñapticaturthakarma*).'[1] He cites fourteen Karmavāchanās: (1) Admission into the order (*pravrajyā*); (2) Ordination of monks (*upasampadā*); (3) Holding the confession ceremony (*uposathā*); (4) Holding the ceremony of invitation (*pravāraṇā*); (5) Residence obligation during the rainy season (*varshopagamana*); (6) Use of leather objects (*charman*); (7) Use and preparation of medicines (*bhaishajya*); (8) Robe-giving ceremony (*kaṭhina*); (9) Discipline; (10) Daily life of monks; (11) Beds and seats, i.e. dwellings (*śayanāsana*); (12) Schisms in the order (*saṅghabheda*); (13) Duties of a student and teacher to one another; and (14) Rules for nuns.

Commenting on the *Karmavāchanās*, Jinānanda says: "The importance of this formula for the history of community life of Buddhism is very great. It permits us to have a peep into the Buddhist church organisation which did not have any supreme head. The whole organisation is imbued with a democratic spirit and follows the parliamentary method."[2]

A valid Saṅghakarma consisted of the following conditions: (1) The presence of the proper number of competent monks; (2) The conveyance of all absentee ballots (*chhanda*); (3) The motion (*jñapti*) being proposed; and (4) The proper proclamation of *Karmavāchanā*. The saṅgha's decision must be in terms of the original *jñapti*. If the *jñapti* was for acquital or discharge, the matter was dismissed. If the *jñapti* was for conviction, a disciplinary Saṅghakarma was required.

Some Aspects of the Saṅgha Organisation

"The Vinaya shows", Horner observes, "that there were in Gotama's Order indolent, lax, greedy monks and nuns, those who were lovers of luxury, seekers after pleasure, makers of discord. We should, however, be greatly mistaken if we insisted upon regarding the Order as riddled by scandal, by abuses and by minor forms of wrong-doing. There is no doubt that these existed; but there is no justification, simply because they happen to be recorded, for exaggerating their frequency, or for minimizing the probity and spiritual devotion of many men who, in Gotama's days, were monks. Records of these are to be found in the Nikāyas, in the Thera-therī-gāthā; and, too

[1]Quoted by Charles S. Prebish.
[2]*Ibid.*

much overlooked, there are in the Vinaya, the virtuous, moderate monks who, vexed and ashamed, complain of the misdemeanours of their fellows. As historians, we must be grateful to these inevitable backsliders, for theirs is the legacy of the Pātimokkha rules. Had the Order contained merely upright, scrupulous monks and nuns—those who were steadfastly set on the goal of the Brahma-life, and those who had, in the circumstances, to voice their annoyance with the wrong-doers—in all likelihood the Vinaya, the Discipline, the Pātimokkha rules would have not come into being, and much of the early history of the Order would now be known to us solely through the indirect and fragmentary way of the Sutta-Piṭaka."[1]

The Bhikkhuṇi Saṅgha

Here some additional observations on the Order of the Buddhist nuns will not be out of place. As is well-known, the Buddha was not at all in favour of admitting women as nuns in his Church, and agreed to do so most reluctantly only after the repeated requests of his foster-mother and aunt Mahāprajāpati were supported by Ānanda and that too after laying down eight special rules for their admission. Briefly, these rules were :[2] (1) A nun, even of a hundred years standing, must make salutation to and bow down before a monk if only just initiated. In other words a monk of whatever standing was always to be saluted by a nun of whatever standing. (2) A nun must not spend the rainy reason in a district in which there was no monk. (3) Every fortnight a nun must know from the monks the date of Uposathā and the day fixed for monk's address (*ovāda*) to nuns. (4) A nun must perform pavāraṇā first in the bhikkhu saṅgha and then in the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha. (5) A nun must take a *manatta* discipline first from monks and then from nuns. (6) A nun, trained in six pachittiya rules of bhikkhuṇī pātimokkha, should seek Upasaṁpadā from both the saṅghas. (7) On no pretext a nun was to revile or abuse a bhikshu. (8) A nun must not admonish a monk and she must not prescribe any date for *Uposathā* or *pavāraṇā* for monks. The official admonition of the nuns by monks, however, was not forbidden. All these rules were never to be transgressed.[3]

[1]Horner, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.
[2]Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 119 f.; Chakrabortty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 221.
[3]Cf. *RHAI*, I, p. 268.

Headship of the Saṅgha

During his life, the Buddha was regarded as the head of the saṅgha and the acceptance of this fact was the first condition of admission into it as the Triśaraṇa formula *Buddhaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi Dhammaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi Saṅghaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi* proves.[1] However, it may be noted that in those days in such a religious Order the leader not only acted as its supreme head and controlled and regulated the life of the whole Order but also nominated his own successor. Therefore, it was in accordance with the custom of the age that the question of the successor of the Buddha was raised by the disciples as well as by others outside the Order. The main cause of the rift between the Buddha and Devadatta was the desire of the latter to be nominated the successor, which the former refused. This refusal paved the way for the introduction of a democratic pattern in the Order The Buddha believed that the teacher could only show the way leading to the Ultimate. His declaration that it had never occurred to him that the Bhikkhu saṅgha was under his direction, is expressive of his concept of the democratic functioning of the saṅgha. He asked bhikkhus to take their refuge in themselves and in the Dhamma and not in any external agency. He advised them to attach importance not to the physical body of the Teacher but to his teachings (*yo dhammaṁ passati so maṁ passati*). On his death the Buddha was like a flame blown out by the wind. He could do no more for the disciples and therefore urged them to take the Dhamma for their refuge. The tradition appears to be authentic and it is quite possible that the call to rely on Dhamma was indeed given by the Buddha himself. Therefore when, after the parinirvāṇa, Ānanda was asked by the Magadhan minister Vassakāra as to who would lead the saṅgha thereafter, the former could immediately answer that the monks would be guided by the Dhamma itself.

In consonance with his belief the Buddha gave a democratic organisation to the saṅgha. The disputes in the saṅgha were solved in a democratic manner.[2] Monks living within a defined boundary (*sīmā*) elected their own Saṅghāthera. Most of the disputes were solved by the saṅgha in the presence of both the parties. Majority

[1]Mahathera, Saddhatissa, 'The Three Refuges', *Mahābodhi*, XXIII, No. 6–7, pp. 167–8. Incidentally, the Triśaraṇa formula shows that the Saṅgha was raised to the status of 'the Buddha' and 'Dhamma'.

[2]Chakrabortty, *op. cit* , p. 204 ff.

view was known by *śalākāgrahaṇa.* The appointment of a *śalākā grāhapaka* was made to conduct the procedure. If the dispute could not be solved in the ordinary course the subject was entrusted to a committee called *ubbahika.* According to the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* the Buddha laid down the formula of the Seven Conditions for the Welfare of the Vajjias and soon after uttering it adapted it as a much larger formulation of the conditions for the welfare of the Buddhist saṅgha.[1]

Here some additional observations on the nature of Buddha's authority in the saṅgha may not be out of place. Views of modern scholars vary as to whether or not the Buddha was accepted as an authority. According to H. Ui Buddha had no special controlling power; he was one of the members of the saṅgha. S. Watanbe states that the discipline of Buddhism did not have any authority. S. Dutt also believes that in Buddhism there existed no central authority or central control. On the other hand, Keith speaks of 'the final authority of Buddha.' B. Matzumoto says that during the life-time of the Buddha and also for a hundred years after his death it was not believed that any one existed who could be vicar of the Buddha. K. N. Jayatilleke states that the whole theory of Buddhism had to be accepted on the authority of the Buddha alone. J. M. Kitagawa argues that "during his life-time, Buddha was the final authority . . . deciding all matters relating to doctrine and practice. . . . It is said that Buddha on his death-bed urged his followers to depend solely on the Dhamma. . . . But the Dhamma was not self-evident : it was the Dhamma taught and interpreted by the Buddha that his followers accepted."[2]

However, the evidence on the problem is rather contradictory. There is no denying the fact that in his own life-time the Buddha asked his disciples to be 'lamps unto yourselves', 'to hold fast as a refuse to the Truth (Dhamma)'. It can obviousty be interpreted to mean that the Buddha did deny his own authority during his life-time. But then, why did Ānanda ask the Buddha himself about his

[1]"So longas, Ānanda," said the Buddha, "the Vajjians hold these full and frequent public assemblies, meet together in concord and carry out their understanding in concord . . . and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the Vajjians . . . so long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjian elders and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words . . . so long may the Vajjians be expected not to decline but to prosper."

[2]For references vide Yu, Chai-Shin, *Early Buddhism and Christianity*, Delhi, 1986, p. 4, n. 1 and 2.

successor? And why did people like Vassakāra raise this question at all? Further, even if the disciples of the Buddha accepted the Dhamma as the final authority, is it still not the case that it was Buddha's teachings which formed the basis of what was considered as authoritative? The fact of the matter is that in early Buddhism the Dhamma was regarded as the universal law which was *discovered* (not *created*) by the Buddha. When he attained Sambodhi, he *realized* the Truth. But whether there was a Buddha or not, the Dhamma would always exist. Therefore to us Chai-Shin Yu appears to be right when he argues that "Buddha's authority was affirmative in the historical sense in that the early Buddhists accepted their founder's teachings as authoritative, although, ultimately, these teachings were to be transcended."[1] The authority of the Buddha was secondary to that of the Dhamma, although his disciples were dependent upon his teachings that could lead them to their ultimate goal.[2]

Place of Saṅgha in Buddhist History

The Buddhist sangha played a great role not only in the history of Buddhism but also in the general history of India and other Asian countries. It became a great missionary force. The Buddhist monks propagated the message of the Buddha throughout India and in other countries of Asia. It is certain that Buddhism could not have become an international religion without the help of the Church. The local branches of the sangha became great educational centres. Actually, for centuries both higher and lower Indian education to some extent remained in the hands of the Buddhist Church. The Buddhist Church imparted education not only in the subjects concerned with Buddhism, but also in subjects concerned with other religions and also in secular branches of knowledge. Nālandā Mahāvihāra is a great example of such institutions. The Buddhist vihāras became centres of artistic and cultural activities also. They produced great sculptors and painters—as the art and paintings of Ajanta prove.

The Buddhist vihāras indirectly became instrumental in the expansion of Indian languages, literature, arts and culture outside India. The impact of the Ajanta paintings on the paintings of Tung Huang caves in China or on the Sigiriya paintings of Ceylon is an example of this process.

[1] *Ibid.*, Ch. I
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Part 3

HISTORY

Chapter 8

THE FOUR BUDDHIST COUNCILS

The First Council

As pointed out by N. Dutt,[1] after the Buddha, the first four stages in the growth and development of Buddhism were marked by the four General Councils or Saṅgītis (Recital or *Saṅgāyanā* Councils). According to the Pali tradition the First Council was held after the death of the Buddha under the auspices of Ajātaśatru at Rājagṛha during the ensuing varshāvāsa, that is only three months after the Parinirvāṇa, for the Parinirvāṇa took place in Vaiśākha, varshāvāsa began in Āshāḍha and the recitation took place in Śrāvaṇa. The tradition preserved in the 11th Khandhaka of the *Chullavagga* has been accepted as authoritative in the different accounts found in extra-canonical literature, such as the *Dīpavaṁsa*, the *Mahāvaṁsa* and the accounts of the Chinese travellers.[2] It is recorded that a bhikshu called Subhadda exhorted the lamenting monks to refrain from expressing grief for the death of the Buddha, for they had got rid of a ruthless Master. This irreverent remark filled the Venerable Mahākassapa with alarm for the future of the Dhamma. He, therefore, suggested to hold a Council of leading monks in order to make a full collection of the teachings of the Buddha with a view to ensuring the future safety and purity of the Dhamma. There is general agreement that the number of the monks selected was five hundred. Originally Ānanda was not included in them, but he was eventually accepted by Mahākassapa as a result of the motion on the part of the monks who pleaded that though not an Arhat, Ānanda had learnt the Dhamma and Vinaya from the Buddha himself. Further, it is recorded that he obtained Arhathood before the actual recitation took place. It is also recorded in some texts that Ānanda had to meet certain charges after the recital of the Dhamma and the Vinaya. But there is no allusion to his failings in the *Dīpavaṁsa*, the *Mahāvaṁsa*, Buddhaghosha's *Samantapāsādikā*

[1]*AIU*, p. 377.
[2]Cf. Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 41.

and the *Mahāvastu*. As regards the actual proceedings, Mahākassapa presided over the assembly and Upāli and Ānanda took leading part in the recitation. There was hardly any dissension over doctrinal matters. It is generally accepted that the Council settled the *Dhamma* (as recited by Ānanda) and the *Vinaya* (as recited by Upāli). There is no ground for the view that the *Abhidhamma* formed part of the canon adopted at the First Council as the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* of Aśvaghosha reports and expects us to believe.

An important item of business transacted at the First Council was the passing of the highest penalty (*Brahmadaṇḍa*) on Channa, the former charioteer of the Buddha. As a monk he had slighted every member of the saṅgha whether high and low, and was arrogant in the extreme. On him was imposed the penalty of complete social boycott.[1] When the punishment was announced to Channa he was seized with profound repentance and in consequence became an Arhat.

The question of the historicity and nature of the First Council has been widely debated by modern scholars. It is *prima facie* impossible to think that two huge parts of the canon, viz. *Sutta* and *Vinaya*, were finally composed and settled within a short period of two or three months[2] for which the Third Council took (of course along with the *Abhidhamma*) nine months. Oldenberg and Franke regard it as pure fiction[3] mainly because it has not been mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*. Rhys Davids repeats this argument though not so emphatically.[4] But as pointed out by Jacobi it was not necessary for the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* to describe the Council. According to some scholars the *Chullavagga*, XI, was originally a part of the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* and was added to the *Chullavagga* in later ages after separating it from the latter. The fact that a work entitled *Saṁyuktavastu*, contains the account of both Parinirvāṇa and the Councils adds strength to the suggestion.[5] But the acceptance of the historicity of the Council does not mean the acceptance of its detailed proceedings. Poussin is inclined to think that it was only

[1]Jinananda, B., in *2500 Hundred Years of Buddhism*, p. 40.

[2]The First month of the varshāvāsa was spent in the repair of the dilapidated parts of the dwellings at Rājagṛha.

[3]Quoted in *Origins*, p. 9.

[4]*SBE*, XI, p. xiii.

[5]Quoted by Pande, *Origins*, p. 10; cf. also Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 46 f.

an enlarged Pātimokkha assembly.[1] According to Minayeff the account of the Council contains two distinguishable parts of which the one, which speaks of the compilation of canon, belongs to a period posterior to the rise of sects.[2] According to Finot and N. Dutt the Council met to determine the less important rules of Vinaya.[3] We may, therefore, conclude with G. C. Pande[4] that though it is no longer plausible to regard the First Council as pure fiction, yet its nature and work remain uncertain.

The Second Council

The Second Council was held a century or 110 years after the Mahāparinirvāṇa (that is in 383 or 373 B.C.). According to the *Chullavagga*, XII, which provides its most ancient history, it was necessitated by the controversy arising out of the liberty taken by the Vajjian monks of Vaiśālī, called the easterners, who were in the habit of practising the Ten Points (*dasa vatthūni*) which were regarded as unorthodox by the westerners.[5] The Ten Points were: (1) carrying salt in a horn for use when needed; (2) taking food after mid-day; (3) over-eating by taking a second meal in a neighbouring village; (4) taking sanction from the saṅgha for an act after it has been done; (5) observation of *uposathā* in different places within the same parish (*sīmā*); (6) using customary practices as authority for an act; (7) drinking of butter-milk after meal; (8) use of rug without a border; (9) drinking of toddy and (10) acceptance of gold and silver. Of these the last point, involving the donation of cash to the saṅgha, was the chief matter of concern according to all versions of the *Vinaya* and also modern scholars such as A. K. Warder.[6] Thera Yaśa, a western monk who visited Vaiśālī, opposed these ten un-vinayic practices and declared them illegal and immoral. Thereupon the Vajjian monks pronounced on him the penalty of *paṭisāraṇīya-kamma* and when he defended his position before the laity, punished him with *ukkhepanīyakamma* (which virtually meant his expulsion from the saṅgha). Thereupon Yaśa went to Kauśāmbī, invited all the monks of the western and southern regions to discuss the matter

[1] Pande, *Origins*, p. 10.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Pande, *Origins*, p. 10; cf. also Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 46 f.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 558 f.
[6] Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 209.

and approached the Venerable Sambhūta Sāṇavāsī of Aghoraghaṇta Hill and the Venerable Revata of Soreyya, who were widely and highly respected. They all declared the Ten Points invalid. Now, at the suggestion of Revata, the monks proceeded to Vaiśālī in order to settle the dispute at the place of its origin. There seven hundred monks met in a Council under the presidentship of the Venerable Sabbakāmī. The unanimous verdict of the assembly declared the conduct of the Vajjian monks to be unlawful

This is the account of the Second Council as given in the *Chullavagga*, XII. According to the *Dīpavaṁsa* and the *Samantapāsādikā* the Council was held in the reign of King Kālāśoka. The *Dīpavaṁsa* mentions that the bhikshus of Vaiśālī met in another Council. It was called the Great Council (Mahāsangīti). According to the *Mahāvaṁsa*, the Council of seven hundred theras compiled the Dhamma. According to the *Samantapāsādikā* of Assaghosha, after the final judgment the seven hundred bhikshus recited the Dhamma and Vinaya to draw up their new edition which was only natural in the circumstances.

There are slight divergences in the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the Council but there is substantial agreement also on its genesis and the matters discussed and decided in it. Oldenberg doubts the genuineness of the Council. His argument against the historicity of the First Council and the answer to it given by Jacobi and others *mutatis mutandis* apply in this case also According to most of the modern scholars the Second Council has every reason to be accepted as genuine.[1] It resulted in a schism in the Buddhist Church and the secession of the Mahāsanghikas which is confirmed by later evidence (*infra*).

The Third Council

The Third Council was held at Pāṭaliputra under the auspices of Aśoka, 236 years after the Parinirvāṇa. It is not found mentioned in the Tripiṭaka. Its earliest reference is in the *Dipavamsa*, the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Samantapāsādikā*. It was occasioned by the need of establishing the purity of the canon which was endangered by the rise of different sects (*infra*). Further, with the conversion of Aśoka, the material prosperity of the monasteries grew tremendously with the result that a large number of heretics, who had lost their income

[1]Winternitz, *HIL*, II, p. 5

and honour, entered the saṅgha. They donned yellow robes, but continued to adhere to their old faiths and practices and preached their heretical doctrines as the doctrines of the Buddha. The discipline in the saṅgha so deteriorated that the pious monks were unable to carry out the rites connected with *Uposathā* and *Pavāraṇā* for seven years. Even in the Aśokārāma, the royal monastery, the ceremonies of *Pātimokkha* were discontinued. When this became known to the king he was filled with distress. He sent a dignitary to the Aśokārāma with the order that internal discord in the community be resolved and the rites resumed. However the monks refused to perform the ceremonies of *Uposathā* with the heretics. Incensed by their disobedience, the dignitary had some pious monks beheaded. Only when he noticed among the *bhikshus* the emperor's own brother, did he stop the massacre and returned to Aśoka with a report of the events. The saddened emperor hastened to the *saṅgha* to find out who was responsible for all that had happened. But he found the monks divided on this issue. Some thought that the culprit was the emperor himself, others blamed both the emperor and the official he had sent, and still others saw the cause lying elsewhere. "Only Moggaliputta Tissa can resolve our doubt," they decided. At that time Moggaliputta Tissa was on Mount Ahogaṅgā, where he had gone after the heretics had joined the *saṅgha*. The emperor succeeded in persuading Tissa to come back to Pāṭaliputra. He asked Tissa whether or not he was guilty of the murder of the monks of Aśokārāma. Tissa answered that there is no guilt without intent. The king was satisfied with the answer. Thereafter for a week Tissa explained to Aśoka the essence of Buddha's teachings after which the king went to his *ārāma* and called an assembly (*sannipāta*) of all the *bhikshus* of the community. According to the *Dīpavaṁsa* (VII. 50), it was attended by 60,000 faithful followers of the Buddha. Together with Tissa, the emperor asked them questions about the essence of Buddha's teachings (*kiṁvādī sugato*), banished from the *saṅgha* those who were proved heretic and asked the pious monks : "What did the Buddha preach ?" In reply he heard : "He preached the teachings of Vibhajja" (*Vibhajjavāda*). Tissa confirmed the correctness of their words and the jubilant king, who believed that the *saṅgha* had been purged of all heresy (*saṅgho visodhito*), went back to the capital, leaving Tissa as the champion of the unity of the *saṅgha*. Now the monks were able to perform the ceremony of *Uposathā*. Tissa, following the example of Mahākassapa and Yasa, began preparations for a Council (*saṅgīti*)

(according to the *Mahāvaṁsa* in the seventeenth year of Aśoka). He selected a thousand learned bhikshus, well versed in the three Piṭakas, in order to restore the true teachings ("the good law") with their help. At the Council, which worked for nine months, Tissa presented his *Katthāvatthu pakaraṇa* in which he examined and refuted the heretical doctrines.

One of the significant results of this Council was the dispatch of missionary bhikkhus to the different regions of India and the various countries of Asia for the propagation of Buddhism. Mahinda and Saṅghamittā, respectively the son and daughter of Aśoka, were sent to Ceylon for this purpose.

The very fact of the Third Council has been rejected by Keith.[1] The silence of Aśokan edicts, the Tripiṭaka and the Chinese travellers over it is given as the chief argument against its historicity. It is also argued that Aśoka could not have lent his support to a particular sect. According to N. Dutt[2] and Keith the Council was a sectarian one meant for the Theravādins and Aśoka or his minister had nothing to do with it. However, as pointed out by D. R. Bhandarkar[3] in his Schism Edict Aśoka explicitly says that the heretical monks and nuns shall be ex-communicated and that was, according to tradition, the primary objective of the Council. It may also be pointed out that Aśoka probably did not have any occasion to mention the Council in his edicts. It may be, as G. C. Pande suggests, that Aśoka was not as intimately connected with the Council as the Pali tradition would have us believe.[4] As regards the *Kathāvatthu*, it is now generally agreed that it was not composed *en bloc*. Its compilation began but was not completed by Tissa.[5]

Recently Bongard-Levin has examined the question of the historicity of the Third Council afresh. He points out that there is nothing inherently impossible in the events connected with the Third Council. The history of the First and Second Councils indicates that there did exist even in pre-Aśokan period contradictions not only between the Buddhists and the adherents of other creeds, but inside the Buddhist *saṅgha* as well. In the age of Aśoka also apparently the *saṅgha* was not united, but was an organisation in which clashes

[1] *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 28 f.
[2] *AIU*, p. 383.
[3] *Aśoka*, pp. 96–102.
[4] *Origins*, p. 15.
[5] Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *Origins*, p. 15.

occurred between individual groups of monks, and dissent arose over matters relating to the structure of the *saṅgha* and over the doctrine itself. "The gradual democratisation of the Buddhist community, the loosening of its rigid organisational standards, the emergence of diverse sects and schools which advanced their own interpretations of the original teaching and the rules of the *Vinaya*, and the migration of followers of these schools and sects to various regions of India—all this undermined the former unity of the *saṅgha* and led to the emergence of protagonists of different schools in Buddhist monasteries. It is quite probable that members of other sects, heretical from the standpoint of the most orthodox doctrine of Theravāda, began to gain admission to the Aśokārāma. This ruled out any joint performance of religious ceremonies, including the *uposathā*, as mentioned in the Ceylonese chronicles."[1]

It is also significant, Bongard-Levin argues, that even in the period preceding Aśoka's rule, the empire was not indifferent towards what was happening in the community. In the Aśokāvadāna of the *Divyāvadāna* open revolts against the Buddhists in Puṇḍravardhana and Pāṭaliputra are mentioned. The instigators of the outrages, Ājīvikas, were murdered together with other opponents of Buddhist religion and Aśoka's own brother, Vītāśoka, a faithful follower of Buddhism, was beheaded by accident. This prompted Aśoka to take action and put an end to the bloodshed. According to the Chinese version of the text, the instigators were not Ājīvikas but Nirgranthas. Many of them were also killed including the king's brother who was mistaken for a follower of the Nirgranthas. After that the king issued a special decree forbidding the killing of Śramaṇas. While A. L. Basham[2] is inclined to regard the evidence of northern Buddhist tradition as quite incredible, Bongard-Levin[3] feels that the conflicts between Aśoka and members of non-Buddhist sects were due to a change in the king's religious policy in the last years of his reign. In both cases, the evidence speaks of an intervention by the king to settle the conflicts and the emperor's brother appears both in the southern and northern traditions. There is, however an important difference between the southern Pali and the northern traditions : while southern tradition's story about the clashes between orthodox

[1]Bongard-Levin, G. M., *Mauryan India*, New Delhi, 1985; p. 351 ff.
[2]Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, p. 148.
[3]Bongard-Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

Buddhists and their opponents serves as a kind of introduction to the subsequent events (the purge of the *saṅgha* and the convocation of the Third Buddhist Council) the northern tradition does not mention the Council.

Bongard-Levin has also pointed out to a number of similarities between the literary narrative and epigraphic data: 1. The Edict's report on the need to expel the schismatics from the community (after making them put on white garments) agrees with the data of the Burmese as well as of the Ceylonese sources. A direct parallel is also found in Buddhaghosha. 2. The evidence of the *Mahāvaṁsa* and Buddhaghosha on cleansing the saṅgha and restoring its unity (*saṅgho samaggo hutvāna*) is exactly similar to the data of the Schism Edict *saṁghe samage kaṭe* (in Buddhaghosha, *samaggo saṅgho*). The version from Sāñchī warrants the supposition that the Edict was published after the split in the *saṅgha*, when the unity of the community had been restored (*samage kaṭe*) and the heretics and dissenters expelled from it. 3. The chronicles (*Mahāvaṁsa*) and Buddhaghosha link the carrying out of *Uposathā* with the restoration of the unity of the community (*saṅgho samaggo hutvāna tadākasi uposatham; samaggo saṅgho sannipatitvā uposatham akāsi*). In the Schism Edict also *Uposathā* is spoken of: "And in the days of *Uposathā* let *upāsakas* also come and be acquainted with the Edict. And let every mahāmātra arrive in the days of *Uposathā* to get acquainted with this order and to understand its purport." 4. Both the *Dīpavaṁsa* and the Schism Edict are unanimous in representing Aśoka as the champion of unity.

These points of similarity between the chronicles and the Edict are very important for establishing the factuality of the events preceding the convening of the Council. But how should the report of the Ceylonese tradition about the Third Buddhist Council in Pāṭaliputra be interpreted in this light? Bongard-Levin feels that in solving this problem, two points recorded in the chronicles seem particularly noteworthy: the assembly of the community was held under Aśoka and the Council was convened by Moggaliputta Tissa and held under his guidance. According to the *Mahāvaṁsa*, for example, on the seventh day after the Buddhist monks had been slain by the king's dignitary, Aśoka arrived at his monastery and called a full assembly of the monks. At this crowded gathering (*bhikkhusaṅghassa sannipāta*) he came to understand the real teachings of the Buddha. There, heretical doctrines were defined and their

adepts were expelled from the *saṅgha*. After purging the *saṅgha* (*saṅgho visodhito*) Aśoka appointed Tissa its protector and returned to Pāṭaliputra. Some time later, Tissa selected a thousand educated monks and convened a Council at which the real *Dhamma* was adopted. Hence, Bongard-Levin argues, even the chronicles clearly distinguish between two events: the assembly of the Buddhist monks under Aśoka, at which the essence of the Buddha's teachings and the community's unity were discussed, and the Council under the guidance of Moggaliputta Tissa, at which the latter presented his *Kathāvatthu pakaraṇa*. This difference is also apparent from the fact that the assembly under Aśoka is called *saṅghassa sannipāta* and the Council convened by Tissa, *Saṅgīti*. In the southern tradition the latter term is applied to the First and Second Councils. A comparison of the sources shows that the evidence of the chronicles relating to the assembly of the monks corresponds with the data of the northern tradition on the *pañchavarsha* under Aśoka, which makes it possible to link the data of the southern tradition on *saṅghassa sannipāta* with that of the *Aśokāvadāna*, the *Aśokāvadānamālā* and Tārānātha on *pañchavarsha* (*pañchavarshika*). According to the *Aśokāvadāna*, the emperor convened a five-year assembly of the community (*pañchavarshikam vṛtaṁ*) and made a generous gift of a large sum of money to the *saṅgha*. Tārānātha mentions three such festival receptions held in the Buddhist community in Aśoka's time (there is not a hint of any Council in his account). In the Chinese text of Kumārajīva also we are told that Aśoka had convened a large five-year assembly (*pañchavarsha-parishad*), at which the issues of *Dhamma* were discussed. In other sources the events are linked with the Council, which makes it possible to outline a certain relationship between the more ancient factual tradition concerning the *pañchavarshika* under Aśoka and the report later transformed by the followers of the Ceylonese Vibhajjavāda school into a story about the Council allegedly attended by Aśoka himself.

Thus, Bongard-Levin concludes, the sources of both the Ceylonese Vibhajjavāda school and of the northern Buddhist school, so different from each other, as well as the later Tibetan historian Tārānātha, all give an account of an assembly of the Buddhist *saṅgha* (or a ceremonial reception of the *saṅgha* by Aśoka) to discuss organisational matters and preserve the community's unity. Only the adherents of the Vibhajjavada school and

Buddhaghosha, who followed them, included the story about the Council, mentioned neither in northern tradition nor in Aśoka's edicts. The Vibhajjavādins, sought to represent themselves as more ancient and to attach more importance to their doctrine protrayed it as the true teaching of the Buddha. They therefore included in their own chronicle an account of a Council at which Tissa allegedly "united into a single whole the *Dhamma*" of the Buddha and made public his *Kathāvatthu pakaraṇa* It is quite probable that the authorship of the *Kathāvatthu* was also ascribed to Tissa by later editors of this school, for this rather motley text, despite its ancient core, dates on the whole from a far later time than the Mauryan epoch.

In the earliest Ceylonese chronicle, the *Dīpavaṁsa*, the two events (the assembly of the community and the so-called Council under Tissa's chairmanship) are separated, whereas in the *Mahāvaṁsa* the two episodes are merged into a single story of the Council, and it is in the *Mahāvaṁsa* that Aśoka's role in holding it is emphasised. The data on the assembly of the monks under the emperor (*saṅghassa sannipāta*) or on the reception that he gave to the *saṅgha* (*pañcha-varsha*), the historicity of which is proved by abundant evidence, were used by the authors of the Ceylonese chronicles as a point of departure and a model for sketching up a picture of the Third Buddhist Council where Tissa made public his *Kathāvatthu* condemning the trends which, from the viewpoint of the Vibhajjavādins, were heretical.

Consequently, the reports of the Third Buddhist Council, which stem solely from the Ceylonese tradition, are primarily due to a biased representation, by followers of the Vibhajjavāda school, of a real event of Mauryan history. This real event seems to have been the assembly of the monks (the *pañchavarsha* of northern tradition) called by Aśoka in view of the difficulties that had arisen in the Buddhist *saṅgha*.

The Fourth Council

The Fourth Council was held in c. 100 A.D. under the auspices of Kanishka I, the great Kushāṇa emperor, who is generally supposed to have ascended the throne in 78 A.D. The place of the Council, according to one authority, was Jalandhar and, according to another, recorded by Yuan Chwang and Paramārtha, it was Kashmir. The southern Buddhists do not recognize the Council and it finds

no reference in the chronicles of Ceylon. Most likely the Theravādin Buddhists did not take prominent part in it. According to a Tibetan record, one of the results of the Council was the settling of the dissensions in the Buddhist saṅgha. The eighteen sects, discussed in the subsequent Chapter, were all acknowledged to be the repositories of the genuine doctrine. According to Yuan Chwang, perplexed by the contradictory teachings of the monks, Kanishka consulted the Venerable Pārśva, convened a Council of 500 monks at his suggestion under the presidentship of Vasumitra and vice-presidentship of Aśvaghosha, built a monastery for their accommodation and called upon them to write commentaries on the Piṭakas (known as Vibhāshāśāstras), commentary on each Piṭaka containing 100,000 ślokas.

The proceedings of the Council were thus confined to the composition of the commentaries. It appears also that the monks of the Sarvāsativāda school predominated at the Council, though it is also quite likely that the major subdivisions of the Sthaviravāda schools, including the less orthodox sections, had some representation in it. There is no evidence that Mahāyāna Buddhism was represented in the proceedings.[1]

According to Yuan Chwang the newly composed *Vibhāshā* treatises were inscribed on copper plates, enclosed in stone boxes and deposited in a stūpa constructed for the purpose. Paramārtha gives a slightly different account of the Council. According to him it was convened by Kātyāyanīputra, the author of the *Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra*, the principal treatise of the *Abhidharma Piṭaka* of the Sarvāstivādins. Aśvaghosha gave literary form to it. The Council devoted twelve years to the composition of the *Vibhāshāśāstras*.

As regards the historicity of the Council, Poussin doubts it. According to him it was an "apologetic quasi-invention". According to N. Dutt it was a sectarian affair of the Sarvāstivādins.[2] But though its details may be exaggerated, it would not be reasonable to disbelieve entirely the tradition which persisted among the northern Buddhists for centuries. In fact the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu is based upon these Vibhāshās and the commentary of Yaśomitra quotes the old Vibhāshā literature. From this it appears that the language used for writing the commentaries was Sanskrit.

[1]Cf. Jinananda, B., in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 48, who places the birth of Nāgārjuna after the Third Council.

[2]*AIU*, p. 385.

Chapter 9

THE EARLY BUDDHIST SECTS

Rise of the Early Buddhist Sects

During the life-time of Gautama Buddha himself certain monks did not accept his leadership or obey his instructions fully. Devadatta, his cousin, who was jealous of him, tried to discredit him and became his personal enemy. He set himself in opposition to the Buddha and, having won over to his side 500 monks, left for Gayāsīsa accompanied by them. Moreover, he planned to murder the Buddha and (as reported by some Buddhist texts) even made a number of unsuccessful attempts on the Master's life. All this can be regarded as a kind of schism in the community (*saṅgha-bheda*), although the *Vinaya* does not qualify these events in these terms. The fact that in early Buddhist texts dissent in the community is discussed also shows that it did exist. The frivolous utterances of Subhadda at the news of the demise of the Buddha have been noted above. Then there were always a few persons who tried to circumvent the Vinayic rules framed by the Master. When in the First Council the *saṅgāyanā* of his teachings was held under the presidentship of Mahākassapa, there were some dissident aged monks like Pūraṇa and Gavāmpati who chose to remain aloof from the Rehearsal declaring that it did not fully accord with what they had heard from the Buddha. Thus it is evident that there were monks who did not fully co-operate with the Buddha during his life-time, and with his chief disciples like Mahākassapa, Upāli and Ānanda, after his death. The refusal of the Buddha to appoint any person as his successor and his declaration that after him his *Dhamma* itself would be the Instructor of the Order, helped centrifugal tendencies, for different consideration led people to form different groups. Further, "The years following the Parinirvāṇa appear to have been marked by a process of growth both with respect to the rules of discipline as well as with respect to doctrine. The Saṅgha grew in wealth, membership and complexity of organisation."[1] The increase

[1]*Origins*, p. 11.

in wealth actually appears to have been the main cause of the dispute which led to the convening of the Second Council and the first schism which took place, as we have seen, a hundred years (according to a Tibetan source, a hundred and ten years) after the Parinirvāṇa when a large number of Vajjian monks from the eastern regions like Vaiśālī advocated Ten Points, which were, according to the orthodox monks, opposed to the rules of Vinaya. The advocates of the Ten Points seceded from the original group called Sthaviravādins or Theravādins and styled themselves as the Mahāsaṅghikas. According to the Ceylonese chronicles, they convened their own council and drew up resolutions in keeping with their own views. This Council became known under the name of *Mahāsaṅgha* or *Mahāsaṅgīti*.

In the Chinese or Tibetan translations of Vasumitra, Bhavya, and Vinītadeva quite a different account of the split is given. According to the these sources the split arose on account of five propositions advocated by a Brāhmaṇa monk named Mahādeva of Pāṭaliputra. These were: the arhats are subject to (1) temptation, (2) ignorance, and (3) doubt; (4) the arhathood may be attained only through the help of a teacher, and (5) the arhats attain the 'Path' with an exclamation of astonishment like 'aho'.[1] It may be noted that the western monks regarded the arhats as 'perfect' and fully emancipated. It is therefore possible that the easterners differed from the westerners with regard to doctrines also.[2]

Be that as it may, the Mahāsaṅghikas held their own Council separately in which they made their own recension of the sacred literature. Thus a split in the saṅgha became an accomplished fact. With the passage of time the division between the two groups grew wider, ultimately one paving the way for Hīnayāna and the other for Mahāyāna. The Theravādins were split up into eleven sub-sects known as Theravāda (or Ārya Sthaviranikāya), Mahīśāsaka, Dharmagupta, Sarvāstivāda, Sam, Kāśyapīya, Saṅkantika (Sautrāntika or Saṅkrāntika), Vātsīputrīya (or Sammitīya), Dharmottarīya, Bhadrayānīya, and Shaṇ-ṇāgarika.[3] The Mahāsaṅghikas were split into seven sub-sects known as the Mahāsaṅghika, Gokulika (Kukkulika), Paññattivāda (Prajñaptivāda), Bahuśrutīya, Chetiyavāda, Ekvyavahārika and Lokottaravāda.

[1]Bapat, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 98.

[2]Dutt, *AIU*, p. 379.

[3]Dutt, N., 'The Buddhist Sects: A Survey', *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 283; also see Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, Ch. 9; Chakrabortty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, Ch. 12; Bapat and Banerjee, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Ch. VI A.

Besides these eighteen, we are told, there arose a few more sub-divisions known as the Siddhatthika or Siddhārthika, Rājagirika, Aparaśaila, Pūrvaśaila (collectively called the Andhakas), Uttarāpathaka, Vetulyaka, Hemavatika (Haimavata), Vajiriya, Hetuvāda, Vibhajyavāda, Abhayagirivāsin, Mahāvihāravāsin, Dhammaruchika and Sāgalīya.[1] The traditions slightly differ in naming the sects but according to N. Dutt on the whole there is a fair agreement, and the differences may conveniently be overlooked.[2]

The oldest and the most orthodox sect was the *Theravāda* (Sans. Sthaviravāda) also known as Āchāriyavāda. According to the Tibetan tradition it claimed Mahākachchāyana, a native of Ujjayinī, as its founder. It had its centre at Kauśāmbī and Ujjayinī and adopted Pali as the sacred language. The doctrines found in the Pali Tipiṭaka, discussed above as early Buddhism, were really those of the Theravādins.[3] Its most important branch was Sarvāstivāda[4] which claimed Rāhulabhadra as its founder, adopted Sanskrit as the sacred language, became popular in Mathurā, Gandhāra and Kashmir, was patronised by Kanishka I, and afterwards spread in Central Asia and China. It held that a being is composed of five dharmas, sub-divided into seventy-five elements, which are permanent in nature. When the Buddha spoke of impermanence, he meant the composite of elements and not the elements themselves. This sect later on became known as the *Vaibhāshika* because it attached more importance to the *Vibhāshās* than to the *sūtras*. Several other sects including the *Mahīśāsaka*, *Sammitīya* (or *Vātsīputrīya*) and the *Sautrāntika* had only minor differences with the Theravāda.

The Mahāsanghika sect, which originated during the Second Council, claimed Mahākassapa as its founder, had its early centre at Vaiśālī, later became more popular in Āndhra (which fact gave it the name Andhaka also) and adopted Prakrit as its sacred language. It differed from the Theravāda not only on some Vinayic rules but also on the nature of the Buddha. It deified the Buddha, asserted that he was supra-mundane (*lokottara*) so that Gautama Siddhārtha was only an apparition of the *lokottara* Buddha, and that *Arhathood*

[1]Dutt, *B.C. Law Volume*, I, p. 283.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]Vide Banerjee, A C, 'The Theravāda School of Buddhism', *Journal of Ganga Natha Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha*, 1976, pp. 185–93, for a detailed study of this sect.

[4]Cf. Banerjee, A. C., 'The Sarvāstivāda Sect', *Calcutta Review*, Vol 175, No I, pp. 1–4.

was not the fully emancipated state and, therefore, one should aspire for Buddhahood and not Arhathood. Among the main sects which branched off from it were the *Śailas* and their sub-sects, the *Chaityakas* and *Vaitulyakas*. They even maintained that the Bodhisattvas are not average beings and are possessed of supra-mundane qualities and that mind (*vijñāna*) is pure in origin and becomes impure only by contact with impurities. These assertions prove that the Mahāsaṅghikas and their offshoots were precursors of the Mahāyāna.

Antiquity and Chronology of the Various Sects

As regards the antiquity of the various sects, in the Ceylonese chronicles their emergence has been shown in a genealogical form without any indication of their chronology. However the information supplied by Yuan Chwang's translation of Vasumitra's book on the Eighteen Sects gives the approximate century after the Buddha's death in which each of them arose from which it appears that most of these sects had come into being by the end of the third century or beginning of the fourth century after the Buddha.[1]

In his commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* Buddhaghosha attributes the views discussed in the *Kathāvatthu* to particular sects and thereby helps us in discovering as to how many of the sects existed before this work was composed. The list of sects so mentioned is as follows: Vātsīputrīya (Sammitīya), Sarvāstivāda, Mahāsaṅghika, Kāśyapīya, Pubbaselīya, Aparaselīya, Rājagirika, Siddhatthika, Gokulika, Bhardrayānika, Mahīśāsaka, Uttarāpathaka, Hetuvādin and Vetulyaka. But the date of the composition of the *Kathāvatthu* is uncertain. The fact that it discusses the views of sects like the Vetulyakas or Sunnatāvādins shows that accretions in it were made till a late date.

As pointed out by N. Dutt the only safe data on which reliance can be placed is the inscriptional evidence. In this connection Bühler remarks that while no sects are mentioned in the Bharhut and Sāñchī inscriptions, in the inscription on Mathura Lion Capital (c. 120 B.C.) the Mahāsaṅghikas and the Sarvāstivādins are mentioned as two rival sects. In the inscriptions of the reign of Kanishka I and Huvishka also these two sects are mentioned more than once. As regards other sects it is only in the Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunīkoṇḍa inscriptions (3rd and 4th centuries A.D.) that the names of the Mahīśāsaka, Bahuśrutīya, Chaityaka and the Śaila schools are found. In a Sarnath inscription (300 A.D.) there is a reference to

[1]Bapat, in *CHI*, I, p. 459.

the Sammitīyas as ousting the Sarvāstivādins who had previously ousted the Theravādins.[1]

Points on Which the Various Sects Differed

As it is not possible to discuss the tenets of all the sects separately, we propose to discuss below the points on which they differed from each other. First, *with regard to language*. As the Buddha had permitted his followers to use their own speech for the purpose of preaching, the various sects adopted different languages for their canon. The Sarvāstivādins, with some of their sub-groups, adopted Sanskrit. The Mahāsanghikas adopted Prakrit as their language. The Sammitīyas, who are often associated with Vātsīputrīyas, used Apabhraṁśa which was understood in the Vatsa country. The Sthaviravādins used an 'intermediate' dialect.

That there was a certain amount of differences among the sects *with regard to disciplinary matters* also, is quite evident. In the account of the First Council, we read of the differences of opinion between Mahākassapa and Pūraṇa of Dakkhinagiri, relating to seven rules, and these seven rules were actually incorporated in the Vinayas of the Mahīśāsakas and Dharmagupta. The differences between the Theravādins and the Mahāsaṅghikas regarding the Ten Points have already been discussed. A remote cause of the Third Council was also that the monks of different sects refused to hold the Pātimokkha assembly together, as one group of monks was regarded as *apariśuddha* (unclean) according to the disciplinary code of another. I-tsing remarks that the Vinaya of the Sammitīyas had special rules regulating the use of undergarments, girdles medicines, and beds. Thus the differences in the Vinaya rules were quite keen.

As regards the *doctrinal differences*, according to G. C. Pande,[2] the various Buddhist sects appear to have differed from each other mainly on the following questions :

(i) The transcendentality (*lokottaratā*) of the Buddha together with the question whether every word of the Buddha could free the hearer from *saṁsāra*.

(ii) How to resolve the contradictions in the canon ? Later on it led to the development of the theory of Two Truths in the Satyasiddhi school which was transitional between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.

[1] *EI*, IX, p. 135, quoted by N. Dutt, p. 284.
[2] *Origins*, p. 563 f.

(iii) The manner of Buddha's birth. His relations with the saṅgha.

(iv) The status of the arhats. While the conception of Buddha was becoming more sublime, that of the arhat was declining. This became the most hotly disputed point in the whole range of early sectarian controversies.

(v) The problem of the existence of *pudgala*.

(vi) The problem of *antarabhāva*, that is the existence after death and before rebirth.

(vii) The existence of past and future objects.

(viii) The functioning of vijñāna.

(ix) The number of *asaṁskṛtas*.

N. Dutt has explaind some of these points as follows: The Theravādins and their offshoots usually conceived the Buddha as a human being who, after strenuous exertion, attained the *sambodhi*. He was subject to human frailties though by his yogic powers he could control the everyday events of human life. Those who subscribed to this view could not attribute to a Bodhisattva any superior qualities. According to them, Bodhisattvahood indicated only the previous lives of Gautama Buddha. Against this the Mahāsaṅghikas and their offshoots held that the Buddha is supramundane (*lokottara*) and is made of pure (*anāsrava*) *dharmas*. His body, length of life, powers, etc. are all unlimited. It is his created body that appears in the world. As a corollary, these schools conceived the Bodhisattvas also in semi-transcendental form. According to them Bodhisattvas are self-born, and not born of parents.

In the eyes of the Theravādins and their offshoots, arhathood marks the final stage of Śrāvakayāna, i.e. an arhat is a fully emancipated person, for he has attained nirvāṇa, the *summum bonum*. He is not subject to temptation and is above good and bad deeds. He cannot be said to acquire merits and can have no retrogression from arhathood. The Sarvāstivādins state that arhats are of two types, viz., *sa*(*sva*)-*dharmakuśala* (aware of one's own dharmas) or *paññāvimutta* and *paradharmakuśala* (aware of one's own as well as others' dharmas) or *ubhatobhāgavimutta*. The arhats of the former type acquire only *kshaya* and not *anutpāda jñāna* and they are subject to retrogression. Such arhats do acquire merits. Of the 12 links of the causal chain, only four, viz. *nāmarūpa*, *shaḍāyatana*, *sparśa* and *vedanā* remain active in the case of arhats. They are also subject to the effects of past karmans.[1]

[1]*Op. cit.*, p. 289 f.

On the other hand, the Mahāsaṅghikas and their offshoots generally held that arhats can have no retrogression from arhathood. However there was a section of the Mahāsanghikas, who were probably followers of Mahādeva, who attributed to the arhats the following frailties : (1) they can be tempted by others; (2) they may have ignorance on certain matters; (3) they may have doubt; and (4) they gain knowledge with others' help. The Śaila schools, however held, in agreement with the Sarvāstivādins, that an arhat is subject to the deeds of his former lives.

According to the Sarvāstivādins and Sammitīyas, the attainment of the four stages of sanctification takes place gradually but there is no bar to the realisation of the second and the third stages at one and the same time, while the Theravādins and the Mahīśāsakas agree with the Mahāsanghikas in holding that the realization of the four stages may take place all at once.

The Sarvāstivādins and the Śailas believe that the organs of senses by themselves perceive while the Theravādins and a section of the Mahāsanghikas hold that it is done by the *vijñāna* of the organs of senses.

The Theravādins hold that there are only three *asaṁskṛtas*, viz. *pratisaṁkhyānirodha, apratisaṁkhyānirodha* and *ākāśa*. The Śaila schools increase them to nine by adding the four higher *samāpattis* (trances), *pratītyasamutpadaṅgikatva* (or the unchangeable law of causation), and the *āryamārgaṅgikatva* (or the fact of attainment of a *mārga* or *phala*) The Mahīśāsakas also count the number of *asaṁskṛtas* as nine, and their list of the additional six is as follows : (i) *achalatā* (or immovability); (ii) *kuśaladharmatathatā* (or the eternal law of good dharma); (iii) *akuśaladharmatathatā* (or the eternal law of bad dharma); (iv) *avyākṛtadharmatathatā* (or the eternal law of indeterminate dharma); (v) *mārgāṅgatathatā* (or the eternal law of the path); and (vi) *pratītyasamutpādatathatā* (or the eternal law of causation).[1]

According to the Sarvāstivādins and others, the *antarabhāva* (temporary existences of being after death and before rebirth) serves as a link between one existence and another. The Theravādins, Mahīśāsakas and the Śaila schools deny the existence of *antarabhāva*.

The Sammitīyas or the Vātsīputrīyas held the doctrine that "there is a *pudgala* (a self, a personality) besides the five elements (*skandhas*)

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 290–91.

composing a being. The *pudgala* is indefinable and persists through the several existences of a being till it reaches nirvāṇa. It is, however, neither identical with nor different from skandhas. It changes alongwith the skandhas, and disappears when the skandhas disappear in nirvāṇa. It is not *kṣaṇika* (momentary) like the skandhas, and it has not all the properties of a constituted object; again it is also not unchanging and ever-existing like nirvāṇa." The Sautrāntikas "hold a doctrine similar to that of the Sammitīyas. They assert the continued existence of the very subtle *citta* (or *bīja* or *vāsanā*). Vasumitra attributes to them the doctrine of the transference of *skandhamātra* from one existence to another, for which they may be identified with the Saṁkantika or the Saṁkrāntivādins."[1]

All the sects and sub-sects mentioned above belong to the Hīnayāna Buddhism. Some of the sects, however, apparently held views which were partially Mahāyānic and may be regarded as the forerunners of Mahāyāna. For instance, the Mahāsaṅghikas and the Lokottaravādins deified the Buddha, introduced the Bodhisattva concept, changed the ideal from arhathood to Buddhahood, and so forth. The Sautrāntika doctrine of the non-existence (*abhāva*) of the gross phenomental objects of the world also brings to our mind the Mahāyānic doctrine of *dharma-śūnyatā*.[2]

The Hīnayānist Philosophical Schools

The principal Abhidharma text of the Sarvāstivādins was the *Jñānaprasthānasūtra* of Kātyāyanīputra. Later on the Sarvāstivādins of Kashmir and Gandhāra came to be designated as the Vaibhāshikas because they accepted the *Vibhāshās* or commentaries written on the above mentioned text as more authoritative than the original sūtras. They accepted the existence of phenomenal objects on direct perception (*pratyaksha*) and admitted examples as proofs of a hypothesis. The *Vibhāshās* were put into literary form by Aśvaghosha and were translated into Chinese in 383–434 A.D. There were many distinguished teachers of the Vaibhāshika school, namely Dharmottara, Dharmatrāta, Vasumitra and Buddhadeva. The greatest of the Vaibhāshika teacher was, however, Vasubandhu who composed the *Abhidharmakośa* and its bhāshya, first translated into Chinese by Paramārtha in the sixth century. The date of Vasubandhu is, however, controversial, the weight of modern scholarship

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 292.
[2] *CHI*, I, p. 478.

presently being in favour of accepting the existence of two Vasubandhus, the elder of whom is assigned to the fourth century A.D. and the younger to the fifth century.[1] Another important Vaibhāshika āchārya was Guṇaprabha who belonged to Matipura. He gave up his Mahāyāna leanings and became a staunch Vaibhāshika.

The Sautrāntika school of the Hīnayāna Buddhism came into existence in Kashmir and Gandhāra. It opposed the realism of Vaibhāshikas and gave emphasis on the *Sūtras* rather than on their commentaries—the *Vibhāshās*. It regarded the phenomenal objects as only appearances (*prajñapti*) the existence of which could be known only by inference (*bāhyārthānumeya*). It admitted the transference of the *skandhamātras* from one existence to another, but asserted that they cease to exist in *nirvāṇa*.

The founder of the Sautrāntika school was Kumāralabdha, a native of Takshaśilā. He flourished between Āryadeva aad Vasubandhu. Another important teacher of the school was Śrīlābha who was an elder contemporary of Vasubandhu.

[1]Cf. Frauwallner, E., *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of Law Vasubandhu*, Rome, 1951; Goyal, S. R., *HIG*, p. 214 ff.

Chapter 10

EXPANSION OF BUDDHISM

Pre-Aśokan Period

In the age of the Buddha, Buddhism gradually took shape as an organisation and slowly but steadily extended its influence. According to tradition, Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru met the Buddha and became his follower. Ajātaśatru asked his advice about his struggle against the Lichchhavis. Sources have retained many stories about Bimbisāra's aid to Buddhist monks, and about the donation of Veḷuvana park (in the vicinity of Rājagṛha) to the Buddha and his adherents. It was under the auspices of Ajātaśatru that the first Buddhist Council was held. But during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Buddhism could hardly be distinguished from other ascetic religions. It was evidently in the Maurya period that it emerged as a distinct current though even at the beginning of this period also, its activities were mainly confined to Magadha and Kosala. Small communities of monks had come into existence in the West also, as in the Second Council held at Vaiśālī about a hundred years after the Buddha monks from distant places like Pāṭṭheya, Avanti, Kauśāmbī, Saṅkāśya and Kanauj participated. Mathura had also become an important centre of Buddhism in the early years of the Maurya supremacy.

In the two hundred years following the Parinirvāṇa, owing to the gradual expansion of Buddhism and for want of regular communication between the distant communities, the saṅgha lost its inherent unity. Local influences slowly affected the conduct of the various communities and shaped them in different ways. This gave rise to various schools (*supra*). During the reign of Aśoka, the saṅgha showed symptoms of serious decline and his edicts tell us that he had to adopt special measures to maintain its unity.

Aśoka and Buddhism

Aśoka is rightly looked upon as the greatest royal patron of Buddhism. We have already discussed the Third Buddhist Council

held in his reign and noted its missionary activities. Indeed, it was through his efforts that Buddhism came to occupy some prominence in India and spread abroad. He was not a born Buddhist. In his Thirteenth Rock Edict he says that at the end of eighth year of his reign, he invaded Kaliṅga (modern Orissa). In that invasion, many thousand men were killed, several thousand were taken captive and thousands died from the effects of the war. It filled his heart with remorse and, probably due to the teachings of some able Buddhist monk at the right psychological moment, he became a Buddhist.[1]

Some early modern historians doubted the conversion of Aśoka to Buddhism. But now it is regarded as a certainty because in his Bhabru Edict he specifically states his faith in the Triratna—the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. In the same edict he suggests that all should study the *Dhaṁma Paliyāyas*, identifiable with certain Buddhist texts.[2] In the Minor Rock Edicts he refers to his visit to the saṅgha[3] and in the Aharaura Minor Rock Edict claims to have enshrined the relics of the Buddha.[4] In the Nigalisagar Minor Pillar Edict he refers to the repairment of the stūpa of Kanakamuni Buddha and his own pilgrimage to it.[5] In the Eighth Rock Edict he mentions his pilgrimage to the Saṁbodhi[6] and in the Maski Edict describes himself as a Buddha-Śākya.[7] Further, in the Rummindei Minor Pillar Edict he describes his pilgrimage to the birth-place of the Buddha.[8]

But all this does not mean that Aśoka preached sectarian Buddhism itself in his edicts, for nowhere does he refer to the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, Pratītyasamutpāda or any other typical Buddhist doctrine. It is therefore generally believed that we must distinguish between his public and personal religion and that the *dhaṁma* of his edicts consisted of points common to all religions. But now more and more scholars are becoming inclined to adopt the view that the *dhaṁma* of the edicts was also an aspect of Buddhism. According to D. R. Bhandarkar his *dhaṁma* may be

[1] See, Thapar, Romila, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 137 ff.
[2] Goyal, S. R., *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, p. 89.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 84; Narain, A. K., *Bhāratī*, 1961-62, p. 105.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 12
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[7] Barua, B. M., *Inscriptions of Aśoka*, II, p. 202.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

traced back to Buddhism for the laity.[1] According to J. S. Negi the non-allusion to the distinctive teachings of Buddhism in his edicts is easily explained if we remember that it was not the purpose of Aśoka to expound the philosophical fundamentals of the creed but to inculcate its practical morality (*sīla*). The *dhamma* of Aśoka, therefore, was Buddhism of the householders.[2] According to G. C. Pande[3] also Aśoka's *dhamma* represents the quintessence of Śramaṇism for the laity. It rejects animal sacrifices, the theory of the Brāhmaṇical privileges (as is clear from the principle of *daṇḍasamatā* and *nyāyasamatā*), emphasizes *dhamma-maṅgalas* and inculcation of 'freedom from depravity' (*apāsinave*), 'much good' (*bahukayāne*), mercy (*dayā*), liberality (*dāna*), truthfulness (*sache*), purity (*sochaye*), and moderation (*mādave*) and also avoidance of violence (*chaṇḍiye*), cruelty (*niṭhuliye*), anger (*kodhe*), conceit (*māne*) and envy (*isyā*). He also emphasizes self-restraint (*samavāya*) and purification of heart (*bhāvasuddhi*). All these were the essential features of Buddhism for the laity.

Aśoka was the first ruler of ancient India who was conscious of the importance of Buddhism for the consolidation of the empire. It is interesting to compare the attitudes of Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru and Aśoka towards the saṅgha. As pointed out by Bongard-Levin, the kings of Magadha who preceded Aśoka kept in touch mostly with the saṅgha, i.e. with Buddhist monks, who lived in seclusion. In contrast to this, Aśoka sought rapport with lay Buddhists as well. It is not an accident that even the edicts of a purely Buddhist nature were addressed to all followers of that creed. His edicts appealed to them. They do not contain any exposition of the Buddhist religious doctrines while such notions of the edicts as "attainment of Heaven" or "earning happiness in this world and the next" were quite comprehensible to the laity. The tenets of Buddhist ethics were equally familiar to laymen. The similarity between the principles of the *Dhamma* of Aśoka's edicts and the rules of behaviour of a house-owner adhering to Buddhist teaching—*upāsaka*—(as given in the Pali canon) is obvious : both rested on ethical rather than philosophical ideas and were determined by the requirements of everyday life.

Aśoka showed concern for the followers of Buddhism in his Schism Edict also. Its Sarnath version contains the order that

[1]Bhandarkar, D. R., *Aśoka*, p. 107–16.
[2]Negi, J. S., *Groundwork of Ancient Indian History*, p. 237.
[3]*Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 50 f.

one copy of it should be passed on to the laymen of the district who were to assemble every day of *Uposathā* to get acquainted with it. Thus in the age of Aśoka the relations between the saṅgha and society at large acquired a new character, transforming Buddhism from a purely monastic movement into a religion of great scope and influence.

Aśoka also took upon himself the task of making known to the people the teachings of the Buddha. He appointed religious officers (*dhamma-mahāmattas*) of various grades and types for different regions to help the people to lead a pious life. He also tried to put an end to schism and corruption in the saṅgha, erected stūpas on the relics of the Buddha, provided immense stimulation to Buddhist art, gave huge donations to the saṅgha and helped Thera Tissa, either directly or indirectly, in convening the Third Buddhist Council. The Third Council sent missionaries to the land of the Yavanas (Ionian Greeks), Gandhāra, Kashmir and the Himalayan regions in the North; to the western part of India such as Aparāntaka; the southern parts such as Vanavāsī and Mysore, and further south to countries as far as Ceylon and Suvarṇabhūmi (Malay and Sumatrā). To Ceylon Aśoka sent his son Mahendra and daughter Saṅghamitrā. This literary tradition is confirmed by Aśoka's RE XIII which states that he tried to spread the Dhamma not only in his territory (*vijita*) or among the people of the border lands (*amtas*) but also in far off kingdoms such as those of Antiochus (Antiyoko) II, King of Syria, and the kingdoms of four other kings, still farther off, i.e. Ptolemy (Turamaya) of Egypt, Antigonus (Antakini) of Macedonia, Alexander (Alikasudara) of Epirus (in northern Greece) and Magas of Cyrene (in North Africa). He also mentions the names of Yavanas, Kambojas, Pāṇḍyas, Cholas, Āndhras, Pulimdas, Ceylon, etc. in this context. In the RE II he informs that in all these countries he opened hospitals, both for men and beasts, dug wells and tanks and planted trees and medicinal plants for the welfare and happiness of all beings.

It is believed by some scholars that the Aśokan propaganda of Buddhism in Western Asia had some, though not much, influence over Judaism also. The pre-Christian monastic sects of the Essenes and the Theraputae (often identified with the Theras or elders of Judaism) probably bore some amount of Buddhist influence. However, it is also quite possible that in Western Asia Buddhism was looked upon with suspicion because it was sought to be propagated

by a powerful monarch of a big neighbouring country.

The success of the Aśokan missionaries activities might not have been very great so far as foreign countries were concerned, but within the Maurya empire these activities must have had great success. His propaganda signified the fulfilment of the prophecy of Brahmā Sahampati as given in the *Mahāvagga*.

T. W. Rhys Davids holds that Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism and his large-hearted benefactions and donations to the saṅgha were the first step on the downward path of Buddhism, the first step to its expulsion from India.[1] At least partial secularization of the Buddhist saṅgha due to its having accepted the right of Aśoka to interfere in its affairs became a source of weakness and might have led to the loss of some amount of popular sympathy.[2]

Expansion of Buddhism in the post-Aśokan Period

The spread of Buddhism during Aśoka's time in the various regions of India resulted in the rise of Buddhist sects whose number is usually given as eighteen. We have discussed them in a separate chapter. Since its inception in Vaiśālī, the Mahāsaṅghika sect was mostly confined to the East from where it spread, especially to the South. The followers of this school probably did not constitute a strong community in the North as they are mentioned only in two inscriptions.[3] However, the existence of practically all the branches of the Mahāsaṅghikas mentioned in literature in the region of Dhānyakaṭaka (Andhra Pradesh) shows that it became the most important stronghold of the Mahāsaṅghikas under the patronage of the Sātavāhanas and their successors. These schools continued to prosper till the 3rd or 4th century A.D.[4] In the North with the advent of the Śuṅgas, royal patronage for Buddhism declined for some time. The Buddhist accounts are unanimous in representing Pushyamitra Śuṅga as a persecutor of Buddhists,[5] though several modern scholars doubt this tradition.[6] Be that as it may, it

[1]Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 222.

[2]Hazra, Kanailal, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India* New Delhi, 1984.

[3]Bagchi, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 63.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]*CHI*, I, p. 519; *PHAI*, 4th ed., p. 359.

[6]Vide, Ghosh, N. N., 'Did Puṣyamitra Śuṅga Persecute the Buddhists?', *B.C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 210–17.

cannot be denied that great progress was made by Buddhism during the Śuṅga-Kaṇva period also. The large number of private donations recorded in the inscriptions of the period and the Buddhist establishments of Bharhut, Karle and Sāñchī testify to the great prosperity which Buddhism enjoyed at that time. By now Buddhism had developed into a popular and theistic religion with symbols and the Buddha relics as cult objects.

At this time Buddhism was also adopted by the Greeks of the North-West. King Menander was a great champion of Buddhism. His Sinkot inscription testifies to his Buddhist leanings while the *Milindapañho* gives a vivid and detailed account of it in the form of the questions he put before Nāgasena. It is also recorded that he attained *arhathood*. The Pali texts represent the Greeks as taking part even in missionary activities. The Greeks in India were also responsible for evolving the Indo-Greek style of Buddhist art which flourished mostly in the Punjab and other parts of North-Western India.

After the Greeks, the Śakas and the Kushāṇas became great champions of Buddhism. The Śaka-Kushāṇa inscriptions testify to its popularity during their supremacy. Kanishka I's reign was a landmark in the history of Buddhism. Tradition not only represents him as a great patron of the religion but also associates him with the Fourth Buddhist Council and a galaxy of Buddhist masters who shaped Buddhism of that period (*supra*). It was in this period that Mahāyāna was evolved, the Indo-Greek school of Buddhist art touched its greatest height and Buddhist monks from India carried their religion to Central Asia and China.

With the advent of the Gupta dynasty, Paurāṇika Hinduism acquired unprecedented popularity. The Gupta emperors were themselves Bhāgavatas, the adherents of Brāhmaṇical faith. But they were sympathetic towards Buddhism also. We have a number of important inscriptions of the Gupta period recording gifts of private donors in the regions of Kauśāmbī, Sāñchī, Bodha Gayā and Mathurā. Many seals, images, inscriptions and manuscripts found in archaeological excavations testify to the continued vigour of the Hīnayāna sects also—particularly of the Sarvāstivādins, the Sammitīyas and the Theravādins.[1] The Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hsien, Sung-Yun, Yuan Chwang, etc. who came to India in this age, also throw light

[1] *C.I*, p. 373 f.

on the condition of the various sects of Buddhism. Moreover, Buddhist art relics from Mathurā, Sarnath, Nālandā, Ajanta, Bagh and Dhānyakaṭaka prove the prosperity of Buddhism in the Gupta age.

From the middle of the 7th century A.D. or even earlier Buddhism shows symptoms of decay also. Nevertheless, some of the great centres of Buddhist studies like Nālandā and Valabhī kept the light burning vigorously. King Harsha of Kanauj, though himself a Śaiva, was quite liberal towards Buddhism and Buddhists.[1] In the West the rulers of the Maitraka dynasty of Valabhī patronised Buddhism from the middle of the 6th century A.D. Numerous Buddhist relics discovered at Valabhī prove the existence of Buddhism in that area up to the 10th century A.D.

The century that followed Harsha's rule saw a state of anarchy unfavourable to the growth of Buddhism, for it depended too much on the patronage of kings who were now themselves in trouble. However, it still lingered in Kashmir, Swat Valley, Valabhī and some other places in the North though its condition was far from prosperous. It experienced another great revival in eastern India under the patronage of the Pāla dynasty, the rulers of which were usually devout Buddhists.[2]

[1]It is generally believed that Harsha embraced Buddhism as his personal religion. We do not believe it. See our work *Harsha and Buddhism*, Meerut, 1986.

[2]Cf. Hazra, Kanailal, *op. cit.*

Chapter 11

CAUSES OF THE SUCCESS OF BUDDHISM

Causes of the Early Success

Extent of the Early Success

It appears from the early texts that Buddhism had gained the support of a large number of people and was securely established in eastern India in the life-time of the Buddha himself. It also appears fairly certain that there already existed many Buddhist centres in Kosala, Vatsa, Magadha, Aṅga and North Bihar before Gautama entered Parinirvāṇa. However, this success of early Buddhism may not have been as resounding as the Buddhist scriptures seek to impress. The Buddhist texts themselves state that the Buddha had to face the hostility of other sects. The *Sāmaññaphala sutta* narrates how the Buddha, surrounded by 1250 disciples, defended his views in the presence of Ajātaśatru in a debate with six royal ministers each of whom supported the doctrines of one of the heretical teachers. It is quite possible that in the days of the Buddha his religion "made a comparatively small impression, in comparison with some of the other heterodox sects, and that the evidence in the texts to the contrary is in fact the invention of the monks responsible for the oral transmission and redaction of the canonical traditions."[1] As pointed out by Basham, "In the Pāli scriptures the chief sectarian opponents of Buddha are the Ājīvikas, led by Makkhali Gosāla; second to the Ājīvikas come the Nigganṭhas or Jains, led by Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, who is certainly the same as Mahāvīra. In the early Jain texts, the chief opponents of Mahāvīra are again Gosāla and his Ājīvikas, while the Buddhists are hardly mentioned. This would suggest that in fact the most influential sect of the time was the Ājīvikas, followed by the Jains. The Buddhists were not prominent enough to merit serious consideration from their opponents."[2] Bongard-Levin also believes that in the beginning of the fifth century B.C. Ājīvikism had more

[1]Basham, A.L., in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, p. 17.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 17–8.

followers than Buddhism.[1] Buddhaghosha relates that when Migāra, a usurer from Śrāvastī who had long patronized Ājīvikism, decided to embrace Buddhism, the Ājīvikas literally besieged his house.[2] The *Aṅguttara* compares Gosāla with a fisherman who had cast his net wide in a river and spoilt a lot of fish (that is, attracted a lot of followers).[3] However, it can hardly be denied that already during the life-time of the Buddha, his sect had become sufficiently prominent to attract the attention of a substantial section of the population of eastern India and the tradition of the Council of Vaiśālī held a century after the Parinirvāṇa indicates that in the intervening period it was active and reasonably flourishing.

Theory of Kshatriya Revolt

The success of early Buddhism, whatever its degree, has been attributed by Rhys Davids and some other scholars[4] to the Kshatriya revolt against the superiority of Brāhmaṇas inherent in the Vedic religion and the caste system. But as pointed out by G. C. Pande the mere fact that the founder of the new religion was a Kshatriya is hardly sufficient to prove the point. According to Basham also "Buddhism placed kṣatriyas before brāhmans in the class hierarchy, and the kings of the time gave considerable patronage to Buddhism, and to other heterodox movements. But they certainly patronized the orthodox clergy as well, and if Buddhism had received nothing but the patronage of a few members of the ruling class, it would have been merely an artificial growth, and its fate would probably have been similar to that of Akbar's *Dīn-i-Ilāhi* two thousand years later."[5] Attention in this connection has also been drawn to the "derivation of the word *Khattiya* in Pāli as *Khettānam patīti Khattiya,* which means that the Kshatriyas were known as such also because they were lords of farm lands. This interpretation is significant. The increased availability of new land and its economic potential in the sixth century B.C., a factor relevant to the second urban growth, led to a scramble for its possession, and the Kshatriya, who knew how to fight well, was naturally the first to take advantage of the new

[1]Bongard-Levin, G. M., *Mauryan India,* New Delhi, 1985, p. 331.
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 332.
[4]Roy, M. N., *From Savagery to Civilization,* p. 9; Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India,* pp. 1–6, 256–7. For other references see *CHI,* I, p. 144 n.
[5]Basham, *op. cit.,* p. 16.

opportunity and he became the lord of the new land in the eastward extending frontiers of the Gaṅgā valley. He had already the coercive power of the *daṇḍa*; now he also got the economic control. What else was needed to acquire the social pre-eminence ! The Buddhists and the Jains were only being realistic in recognising the priority of the Kshatriya in the existing Indian social order. The Buddhists who were the first to propose a form of social contract theory for explaining the origin of kingship and the first to reject any divine interference by Brahmā or Vishṇu, were by no means interested in the supremacy of the Brāhmaṇa priesthood. After all, even the land which the Brāhmaṇa received and which might make him a *mahāsāla* was in most cases a gift to him. By praising the pre-eminence of the Kshatriya, the Śramaṇas were only telling the truth and emphasising their relatively important role of leadership as well as of protecting the society as a whole, albeit ensuring by such praise Kshatriya support and patronage for themselves."[1]

Causes of the Early Success : Nature of the Dhamma

The causes of the rapid expansion of Buddhism were many and may be divided into two groups: (1) the causes which led to its success in the age of the Buddha himself and shortly after his Nirvāṇa, and (2) the causes which led to its spread in India and other countries in the later ages. Among the primary causes of its immediate success the simplicity and moderate nature of the Dhamma may be mentioned first. As Rhys Davids puts it, "had the Buddha merely taught philosophy, he might have had as small a following as Comte." As it is, in his teachings he avoided philosophical problems and emphasized the moral aspect of religion. This factor undoubtedly did much to make his teachings popular among the common men who were more confused than enlightened by the philosophical discourses of other contemporary thinkers. His system also avoided extreme type of asceticism and therefore could attract the common man who was wary of the extreme self-mortification. For a lay-devotee the practice of his dhamma needed very little extra expenses, thus providing a striking contrast to the costliness of the Vedic rituals. His denunciation of slaughter of animals in the name of religion received widespread support and his condemnation of the superiority complex of the Brāhmaṇas appealed to the non-Brāhmaṇa masses. Further, early Buddhism laid no claims

[1]Narain, A. K., Preface to the *Studies in History of Buddhism*, p. xxviii.

to being orthodox. What was expressed was merely a fraction of 'real truth'. The Buddha called upon his followers to accept his injunctions but his appeal was not categorical. He also asked them to be their own light. Above all, though original in some respects, at no point his religion involved a violent break from the past. He described his dhamma as the 'ancient wisdom of the land'. According to P. V. Kane and many others he was "born a Hindu, lived a Hindu and died a Hindu."[1]

Zeal of the Monks, Use of Popular Language, Patronage of Kings and Force of Buddha's Personality

Secondly, to a considerable extent the credit for early spread of Buddhism should be given to the zeal of the monks on whom the Buddha enjoined the task of propagating the dhamma. He was himself a great missionary and, like Jesus Christ, made first-rate missionaries out of his disciples—Sāriputta, Moggallāna and others. The Buddhist nuns also did commendable propaganda among the women-folk.

Thirdly, the Buddha and his followers preached to the people in the latter's own language. thus securing an advantage over Brāhmaṇism whose medium of religious teaching, Sanskrit, was the language of only the educated few. Buddhism was not linked with any specific language and, therefore, with any specific area. The *Majjhima Nikāya* (III. 235) states that it is necessary to use words understandable in every region. Thus the Buddha championed a kind of language tolerance.[2] "When two monks 'of cultivated language and eloquent speech' complained that monks of various names, clan-names, and races (or castes) were corrupting the Buddha's message by repeating it in their own dialects, and asked for permission to put it into Vedic verse he firmly rejected their petition. 'Deluded men!', he exclaimed, 'How can you say this? This will not lead to the conversion of the unconverted.' And he delivered a sermon and commanded all the monks : 'You are not to put the Buddha's message into Vedic. Whoever does so shall be guilty of an offence. I authorize you, monks to learn (and teach) the Buddha's message each in his own dialect (*sakkāya niruttiya*).' In order to impress his teachings upon the minds of his auditors, as well as to facilitate its dissemination, he moreover had recourse to the repeti-

[1]Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmaśāstra*, p. 1004.
[2]Bongard-Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

tion of key words and phrases, the drawing up of numbered lists of terms, and other mnemonic devices."[1]

Fourthly, the liberal patronage of kings, republican chiefs and wealthy and influential persons were valuable assets to the Buddha. As he was himself born as the son of a republican chief he was intimately connected with the contemporary royal families. Further, despite the fact that he adopted a democratic organisation for his saṅgha, the Buddha did not reject a monarchical system of government; rather he advocated strong political power. It made it easier for him to enlist the patronage of kings of his times.

Fifthly, the force of Buddha's own personality also did much to attract attention to his teachings. All accounts are agreed that he possessed remarkable personal qualities. He had an attractive personality, was gifted with learning, mild speech, compassionate disposition, wide tolerance and other admirable mental and moral virtues. His personal qualities played an important role in attracting and converting a large number of people to his dhamma.

Patronage of and Relationship with the Merchant Class

But perhaps the most important cause of the success of early Buddhism lay in the fact that Buddhism was in tune with the changing economic pattern of the contemporary society. As pointed out by A. L. Basham, A K. Narain and B. G. Gokhale, the period about the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. was one of great economic expansion and urban revolution. Vedic religion, with its economic setting of rural conditions, was not wholly in tune with it while Buddhism was consonant with the new development. With its agrarian economy and sacrificial rituals, the Vedic religion tended to acquire a local character. It may not be without significance that a large number of the leading seṭṭhis of the period, who formed the spearhead of economic growth, were among the main supporters of the Buddha. According to Basham by far the greatest number of the patron's of Buddhism were "members of the rising 'middle class' of merchants, and craftsmen of the better and more higly skilled sort. As far as we can gather from the votive inscriptions, it was chiefly these who, some centuries later, provided the funds for the construction of the great *stūpas* and cave monasteries, and it was the wealthy merchant for whose support one sect vied with

[1]*Cultural History of India*, ed. by A. L. Basham, p. 88.

another, in contests which occasionally resulted in bitter altercations, sometimes perhaps even leading to blows. It is at first surprising that this other-worldly movement, with its rather pessimistic attitude, and its emphasis on detachment and the renunciation of most of the material pleasures of life, should have made an appeal to the mercantile class at a time when trade was expanding rapidly. But this is not really very strange. We can find other cases of merchants adhering in large numbers to new religious movements of a rather pessimistic kind, which tended to promote frugality. Early Christianity, Islam and Calvinism are examples in point. . . . Allowing for many obvious differences, it may well be that the appeal of Buddhism to the merchants of ancient India was very similar to that of protestant reform movements to the merchants of 16th century Europe. The great body of the Pāli scriptures is, of course, addressed primarily to monks and to laymen whose attitudes and ways of life have been much influenced by monkish ideals. But within the Pāli canon, if we look for it, we can find a good deal of material which is primarily addressed to the householder and his family. Buddhism had its practical everyday side, which is especially manifested in the *Jātaka* stories, but may also be found in many verses of the *Dhammapada* and the *Sutta Nipāta*, and in a few of the suttas, particularly the fine *Sigālovāda-sutta*. These texts, far from urging the layman to break the bonds of everyday life, encourage many practical virtues: friendliness to all and sundry, loyalty to family and friends, industry, self-control and frugality. The moral of more than one *Jātaka* story is that a man should be shrewd and on his guard in his dealings with strangers. There are also a few passages in the Pāli canon, notably the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*, which are primarily intended for the ruling classes, giving advice on how a state should be governed according to Buddhist principles. But these are very scanty in comparison with the quantity of material intended for the well-to-do middle class layman, the *kulaputta*. Early Buddhism, in fact, made its chief appeal to the rising middle class of the times, and the same seems true of the other heterodox sects also."[1]

Early Buddhism and the Second Urban Revolution

Actually the significance of the association of Buddhism with urbanism cannot be under-estimated. Buddhism was a part of and emerged from the ancient Śramaṇa tradition which was closely

[1]Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 16–17.

associated with the growth of cities, even before the advent of the Vedic Aryans for, as we have seen, while in the pastoral culture of the Vedic people the munis and yatis were looked down upon, in the Indus civilization respect for the elements of Śramaṇa tradition—yoga, meditation etc., is strongly indicated. The point has been elucidated best by A.K Narain and we cannot resist the temptation of quoting him in detail: "The conclusion seems irresistible," he opines, "that the Śramaṇa tradition is intimately linked with the cities which rose on account of new technological developments, surplus agricultural produce and resultant growth of trade and commerce. This urbanism led to material prosperity, conflict situations arising out of the problem of demand and supply, reaction against the mechanisms of affluence, suffering on account of tensions of life and insecurity of the person, and also to a concern for the preservation of the fauna and flora, which were being destroyed by the rise of cities and self-indulgent, savage rituals and games. All these factors were indeed sufficient to drive some out of the cities to wander forth in search of an end to suffering, and others to seek help from those who exerted and found means to alleviate the pain The householders and merchants of the cities, and kings and courtesans alike, therefore, respected the Śramaṇas and supported them The Śramaṇa tradition was in a way a natural concomitant, or an outgrowth, of the urban culture. (The present reactions against the affluent society and economy in the West is only a new reminder of this feature.) In the milieu of the pastoral culture of the Vedic people there was no scope for it. The Śramaṇa did not belong there. But after, and to a large extent because of, the second spurting up of the cities in the 7th-6th centuries B.C., in the central and eastern parts of northern India, those conditions emerged again in which the new representative movements of the Śramaṇa system could rise and flourish, though this time in the Gaṅgā valley instead of the Indus... the Vedic people had by now ceased to be the barbarian destroyers of cities they originally were in the northwest, and that their tribal society and polity had already yielded to territorial life style, organisation and ambitions. And so, the "Aryans" as well as the "Non-Aryans" had become exposed to the hazards and tensions, albeit the benefits too, of the new urban life and its material affluence. No wonder both elements of the population were receptive to the Buddha ard other leaders of the Śramaṇa system of thought.

"The urban basis of Buddhism is overwhelmingly clear from the

fact that most of the *vassāvāsa* of the Buddha were spent in the cities, and for that matter in the chief ones of the various States of the time. Most of the sermons recorded in the Pāli *Nikāyas* were delivered in large cities like Rājgaha, Sāvatthi and Kosambi. The appeal of his doctrine primarily to men of urban background is unmistakable. It is revealing that as many as 71% of the monks and nuns listed in the *Thera* and *Theri-Gāthā* came from urban areas and nearly 86% came from the four great cities of the time, Sāvatthi, Rājgaha, Kapilavatthu and Vesāli. Of the other cities 6 belonged to Sāket, 5 each to Kosambi, Vārāṇasi and Ujjeni, 4 to Champā, 3 to Pāṭaliputta, 2 to Bharukaccha and 1 to Suppāraka. So also the tradition that Ānanda was concerned as to where the Buddha should enter Mahāpariṇirvāṇa, and that he listed the big cities as possible locations for it, are again significant pointers to the urban association. The Pāli texts are replete with references that indicate the involvement of the Buddha and his disciples with the urban society and its problems. A large number of monks and nums belonged to the upper classes of society. Many of them came from the Rājakulas and the Setthi class. About 51% of those mentioned in the *Thera* and *Theri-Gāthā* came from the Khattiya and Vessa classes and about 40% from among the Brāhmaṇa, out of whom about 20% were the wealthy ones, the Brāhmaṇa *Mahāsālas*. The concern of the Buddha, on the one hand, for the new nobility, the burgeoning merchants and the flourishing *mahāsālas* and *gahapatis*—both of Brāhmaṇa and non-Brāhmaṇa categories—and on the other hand such alienated products of the new urbanism as the women who took to the prostitution, like Āmrapāli, or the robber Angulimāla, cannot be missed in his teachings. It also is interesting to note that some of the earliest descriptions of the planning and architecture of the cities of this second period of urban growth are found in Buddhist and Jain sources, not in the Brāhmaṇic."[1]

Early Buddhism and the Rural Society

But the fact that the Śramaṇa movement in general and Buddhism in particular were connected with urbanism does not mean that they had nothing to do with villages and farmers. "After all, the Buddha and the other Munis of the Śramaṇa tradition received their enlightenment not in the cities and its palaces but in the sylvan

[1]Narain, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi–vii.

suburbs and forests.... It is true that the Śramaṇas delivered the goods to their urban clients in their *vassāvāsa* and received patronage and, in return, injected the urbanites with the amount of spiritualism necessary for the relief of their materially-based tensions. But two-thirds of the year, after all, they did their *chārikā* outside the urban environment, and in these journeys they frequented many villages. To be sure, among the outstanding disciples of the Buddha, Sāriputta and Moggalāna came from rural areas. It would be wrong to say that Buddhism was of no appeal to the villagers or was not meant for them. Human problems and suffering are not confined to urban boundaries. In fact, Buddhism provided a bridge between the city and the village. The cities depended upon the farmers and their produce; they cannot be imagined without their rural base. Buddha was in rapport with the farmers and was welcome in the villages."[1]

Appeal of Early Buddhism to Various Social Classes

Early Buddhism could make an appeal to most of the social classes. It responded "to the needs of a wide and important section of the Indian population. We can infer the character of the most important patrons of early Buddhism from the Pāli text themselves. Among the lay supporters of the new sect and its teacher referred to in the Canon are a number of kings and chiefs, and a few members of the poorer classes of the community, such as peasants and small crafts men."[2] Among those who came from the poorer sections of the society were included Upāli, the son of a barber, Chunda the smith from whom the Buddha recieved the last meal, Puṇṇa, a farm servant, Puṇṇā, a slave-woman, Sopaka, foster-son of a night-watchman and Suppeya the son of the same night-watchman. For the poorer sections of the population joining the saṅgha meant an improvement of their condition. According to the *Vinaya* (I. 77) "they eat good food and lie in bed protected from the wind." In the *Sāmaññaphala sutta* Ajātaśatru asks the Buddha whether the life of cooks, barbers, servants and other members of the lower castes would change after they became monks. The Buddha replied that those people would live like kings. But Buddhism also responded to the needs of the members of the other side of the social pole, namely the Brāhmaṇas. According to the *Mahāvagga* once a thousand Brāhmaṇa ascetics joined the saṅgha. The first major group to be

[1]*Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

[2]Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

converted by the Buddha after his Enlightenment was that of "the Jaṭilas, led by the Brāhmaṇa Kashyapa. One has only to go through the Pāli canonical literature to see how strong in number were the Brāhmaṇa followers of the Buddha who had rejected the claim of their Brāhmaṇahood by birth. It has been shown that over 40% of the leading monks and nuns taken together belonged to the Brāhmaṇa caste."[1]

B. G. Gokhale made an interesting study of a group of 332 Buddhist elite found scattered in the *Theragāthā*, the *Therīgāthā* and the *Paramatthadīpanī* commentary of the *Dhammapada* belonging to the period from c. 500 to 250 B.C. and has shown that (a) the composition of the elite group was predominantly urban in character (over 71% of them hailed from the urban areas and about 20% belonged to the rural areas). (b) The Brāhmaṇas formed the largest single group, the Vessas were second, the Khattiyas third and Suddas fourth. There were only 21 Suddas out of 328 whose caste is known. (c) Among the Vessas and the Khattiyas, the wealthy predominated while the ordinary Brāhmaṇas were more in number than the wealthy ones. (d) Among the reasons of conversion, the influence of the personality of the Buddha and of his eminent disciples was the largest single factor. Other causes were the influence of the lay-disciples, domestic difficulties, personal tragedies and intellectual conviction.[2]

Causes of the Later Spread of Buddhism

Most of the causes of the immediate success of Buddhism could not have been responsible for its later spread—after his death the personality of the Buddha could no longer be the cause of attraction of the people towards his faith, the practice of using the language of people was later on given up by the Buddhist monks in favour of Sanskrit and the Dhamma did not remain as simple as it was during the age of the Buddha. The socio-economic conditions of the society in which Buddhism arose also changed. Yet for some time the popularity of Buddhism continued to grow because of three factors:

[1]Narain, *op. cit.*, p. xxvii–viii.

[2]Gokhale, B. G., 'The Early Buddhist Elite', *JIH*, XLIII, Pt. II, pp. 391–402.

Royal Patronage

It was available to Buddhism in abundance. Aśoka, Kanishka, many rulers of the Sātavāhana dynasty, Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya of the Imperial Gupta house, etc. were great patrons of Buddhism. Even those kings who followed other faiths—such as most of the Gupta emperors and Harsha—were usually sympathetic to this religion.[1]

The Buddhist Church

It was a great factor in the propagation of this religion. Perhaps no other religion in India had such an organised body, the primary work of whose members was the propagation of their faith. The spread of Buddhism in China, Tibet, Ceylon, etc. was largely the work of the Buddhist missionary monks.

The Social Flexibility of Buddhism

Buddhism did not call for abolition of traditions and customs; it only offered its own explanation of the same. Its capacity to adapt itself to the new social conditions made it possible for it to become acceptable to the people of other countries. On the other hand, the intimate connection of caste system with Hinduism made the popularity of the latter in other countries impossible because the caste system did not exist outside India.

[1]We do not subscribe to the view that Harsha was personally a Buddhist. See our paper, 'Did Harsha ever Embrace Buddhism as His Personal Religion?', *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, 1981, pp. 376-93; *Harsha and Buddhism*, Meerut, 1986.

Chapter 12

MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

Meaning of the Terms Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna

Buddhism may broadly be divided into three Yānas—Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna. The term Hīnayāna is usually adopted for early Buddhism which commenced with the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha. All the sects of Buddhism discussed in the preceding pages belonged to the Hīnayāna. The Mahāyāna grew out of the Hīnayāna though it traces its final authority to the Buddha himself. Other terms used respectively for these two branches of Buddhism are (i) Buddhayāna or Tathāgatayāna or Bodhisattvayāna and (ii) Śrāvakayāna or Pratyeka-buddhayāna. However the terms Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna are the most popular ones. The reason usually given for prefixing *mahā* (superior) and *hīna* (inferior) to *yāna* (vehicle) is that the former carries an adept to the highest goal of Buddhahood as was attained by Siddhārtha Gautama while the latter carries a person only to the stage of an arhat, which is, in many respects, inferior to that of the Buddha. Further, as argued by Asaṅga in his *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, the Mahāyānists never seek their own salvation before others have attained it.[1] They take the vow that they will attain *bodhi* only after they have done all that is necessary for making all other beings attain the goal. On the other hand, the Śrāvakayānists or Pratyeka-buddhayānists seek their own salvation first which Asaṅga calls selfish and justifies thereby the use of the prefix *hīna* for their path, and *mahā* for his own creed.[2]

In order to impart authenticity to their religion, the Mahāyānists advocated the doctrine of two fold truth in the teachings of the Buddha : the outer exoteric truth meant for ordinary people and esoteric truth meant for the highly evolved ones. The Hīnayāna is

[1] *CHI*, I, p. 503.

[2] According to A. A. G. Bennett originally the term 'Mahāyāna' was used for the First Principle, *bhūta-tathatā* or *tathatā* by Aśvaghosha. ('The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 71, No. 6, pp. 123–32).

concerned with the exoteric truth while the Mahāyāna is concerned with the esoteric truth.

The Mahāyāna works also give a philosophical explanation of the two yānas. There are, they argue, two *āvaraṇas* (covers) that shield the Truth : the cover of impurities (*kleśāvaraṇa*) and the cover of ignorance (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). The *kleśāvaraṇa* is removable by the observance of the ethical laws and the practice of the various forms of meditation. The Mahāyānists believe that the Hīnayānists are taught only the means of the removal of *kleśāvaraṇa* and, as such, they get free only from impurities, realize *pudgala-śūnyatā* and become arhats. But the Mahāyānists are taught the means of the removal of *kleśāvaraṇa* and *jñeyāvaraṇa* both. Therefore they become free from ignorance as well, realize both *pudgala-śūnyatā* and *dharma-śūnyatā* and become Buddhas. It is for this superior attainment that they deserve the distinctive appellation of 'Mahāyānist'.[1]

Main Differences between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna : the Doctrine of Śūnyatā or Tathatā

Briefly the Mahāyāna is characterised by the doctrines of universal emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and Trikāya, the plurality of the Buddhas and of their divinity, the ideals of bodhisattva and perfect virtues (*pāramitās*), the worship of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other gods and goddesses, the doctrine of salvation by faith (*śraddhā* or *bhakti*), use of spells (*dhāraṇis*) and mantras for attaining emancipation and the adoption of Sanskrit and mixed-Sanskrit for literary purposes. Further, the Mahāyāna makes little difference between an upāsaka and a bhikshu (for, both could develop bodhichitta and aspire for the highest goal). The laity, therefore, came to play an important part in it.[2]

It should, however, be remembered that Mahāyānism is neither antagonistic to Hīnayānism and nor rejects its completely; rather it accepts the teachings of the Hīnayāna in full and adds to them its new ideas and principles. It utilizes the same Buddha *vachana*, which are regarded by the Hīnayānists as authentic, for establishing its own point of view. With the Hīnayāna it accepts the Four Noble Truths, the theory that the worldly objects are transient (*anitya*), momentary (*kshaṇika*), anātmaka and in perpetual flux (*santāna*), necessity of getting rid of *rāga*, *dvesha* and *moha*, the doctrine of the

[1] *CHI*, *I*, p. 504.
[2] Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 4 f.

beginninglessness and endlessness of the world and the supremacy of the law of causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*). In his *Mādhyamikakārikā* Nāgārjuna, the first great exponent of the Mahāyāna, has identified the law of causation with Dharma or the Highest Truth and Buddha (*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṁ paśyati, so dharmaṁ paśyati, yo dharmaṁ paśyati so Buddhaṁ paśyati*).

But both the sects differ on some major points. The main difference between the two hinges on the interpretation of *śūnyatā* or *anātmakam*; it is from their different interpretation of this doctrine that most of their other differences emanate. By *śūnyam* or *anātman* the Hīnayānists understood the non-existence of any real substance as *ātman* or individuality i.e. *pudgalaśūnyatā*, while the Mahāyānists took it to be the non-existence of individuality (*pudgala-śūnyatā*) as also of the objective world (*dharmaśūnyatā*). N. Dutt explains it by a simile thus: one may say that the Hīnayānists do not differentiate between an earthen jar and the earthen horse while the Mahāyānists assert that not only the difference between the earthen jar and the earthen horse does not exist but the substance or dharma (in this case, earth) also does not exist.[1] Thus the Truth according to the Mahāyāna is *śūnyatā* of both the types—*pudgala-śūnyatā* and *dharmaśūnyatā*. This *śūnyatā* is attributeless, negation of being and non-being, or *tathatā* (the state of sameness or thatness) or *dharmadhātu* (totality of phenomenal manifestations which is identical with Nirvāṇa or Buddha). Thus *śūnyatā* is Buddha, eternal, without origin or decay, the Truth, and beyond any description whatsoever. The Mahāyānists believe that the real knowledge or Truth cannot be obtained without the comprehension of both the *śūnyatās* or *tathatā* or *dharmadhātu*. It can be achieved by the removal of the two veils (*āvaraṇas*) known as *kleśāvaraṇa* (veil of impurities) and *jñeyāvaraṇa* (veil that covers the truth). The Hīnayānists, whose aim is individual enlightenment (*arhathood*) through the realization of the non-existence of soul (*pudgalanairātmya*), eradicate impurities (*kleśāvaraṇa*) only, while the Mahāyānists, who seek Buddhahood through *pudgalanairātmya* and *dharmanairātmya* claim to eradicate the cover of ignorance (*jñeyāvaraṇa*) along with the cover of impurities (*kleśāvaraṇa*).

However, in view of the fact that the mere attaining of Nirvāṇa by a monk was considered selfish and its postponement for the sake of suffering humanity by a Bodhisattva was regarded as an enormously

[1] *CA*, p. 377.

superior ideal, the Mahāyānist approach distinctly favoured an altruistic ethics, according to which the individual is supposed to work for the sake of the whole world. This shifting of the religious ideal from Arhatship to Bodhisattvahood gives a pronounced preference to one who is engaged in social works as against one who leads a merely contemplative life in seclusion.

Factors in the Rise of Mahāyāna

The development of Mahāyāna was caused by complex factors. Dr. Har Dayal suggests that it must have been the result of not only the natural development of some latent tendencies in the original Buddhism but also of the influence of other Indian religious sects like the Bhāgavatas and the Śaivas, Persian religion and culture, Greek art and Christianity and of the necessity of propaganda among the new semi-barbarous tribes.

Development of Some Latent Tendencies in Early Buddhism

There is hardly any feature of Mahāyāna that cannot be shown to have its roots in early Buddhism. Although in the Pali Tripiṭaka the Buddha is largely depicted as an historical human being, living and preaching like so many other preachers, there are places where references are made to his identity with the Dhamma. The words *Rūpa-kāya* and *Dharma-kāya* are used in the Pali literature. To an ailing bhikku named Vakkali the Buddha had remarked: "What do you gain, O Vakkali, by seeing this vile body? Whoever, Vakkali, sees the Dharma, sees me and whoever sees me, sees the Dharma." At the time of his Parinirvāṇa, the Buddha said: "The Dharma and Vinaya that I have taught and made known will be your teacher after my death." Even the Triśaraṇa formula contained the seeds of the doctrine of the identity of the Buddha and Dhamma. Gautama the Buddha, according to orthodox Theravāda Buddhism, completely ceased to exist on his *Parinirvāṇa*. The chain of cause and effect which constituted his body and mind came to a full stop; the aggregate of the elements of being which formed his human personality was completely dissipated—only Nirvāṇa was left and in Nirvāṇa there is no person or personality, no individual. But how can a non-existent become a *śaraṇa* of anyone or anybody? Only the Dhamma or Saṅgha are capable of giving protection, that is helping an individual to defend himself against the evil impulses which produce suffering in this world and the next. Therefore, as

Basham points out, on a strict interpretation the formula *Buddhaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi* is meaningless and gave trouble to Theravāda theoreticians. It implied that the Buddha is in some sense still present and offers protection against all evils, more than the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, to those who take refuse in him. Thus the Triśaraṇa formula contained the Trikāya doctrine of Mahāyāna in embryo. It implies that the Buddha in his earthly form may well have dissolved in Nirvāṇa, but the Dharmakāya or Buddha in the form of Dhamma still exists. The *Milindapañho* states that the Buddha had passed away completely but he still exists in his Dhamma, presumably in the same sense as Tulsidas survives in his *Rāmacharitamānasa*. Such arguments do not remove the logical inconsistency in the Theravādin standpoint inherent in the formula *Buddhaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi* which indirectly prepares the mind of the devotee for the acceptance of the Mahāyānist doctrine of Trikāya of the Buddha.

Regarding the two-fold truth of the Mahāyāna, one may argue that it is foreign to the original teachings of the Buddha who has openly declared in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*: "The Dharma has been taught by me, Ānanda, without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric. The Tathāgata does not have the closed fist of a teacher with regard to the Dharma." But even in this case indications to the contrary are known. The Dhamma is discribed as "profound, difficult to see, difficult to comprehend, tranquil, subtle, beyond reason" etc., in view of which the Buddha, after his Enlightenment, wondered whether or not he should preach it. Finally, he decided to go to Ṛṣipatana (Sarnath) to preach it to his five highly-advanced companions. But he did not preach to all people in the same way; he preached differently to different people. When Sāriputta imparted the doctrine of Anātmavāda to the gahapati Anāthapiṇḍika at the time of his illness, the latter remarked: "For a long time I have been in service of the Master and contemplative monks. But never before did I hear a religious discourse like this." To this Sāriputta replied: "Such a discourse, O housholder, is not comprehended by a white-clad householder. Such a discourse is comprehended by a recluse." In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* also the Buddha is stated to have said that the truth he had disclosed is far less than what he has not disclosed. Such statements lend support to the theory of two-fold truth of the Mahāyānists.

[1]Basham, A.L., in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A.K. Narain, p. 20.

The early Buddhism had in no way denied the existence of gods, either great or small, though it insisted that they were finite beings (the *Agañña sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*) and made Brahmā and Indra the devotees of the Buddha. The germs of the Mahāyānist doctrine of bhakti may also be traced in the Hīnayānist virtue of *saddhā* (*śraddhā*). Though the Pali canon emphasises that the seeker after truth should not accept the teachings of the Buddha on trust but should think it out for himself (*atta dīpa viharatha*), the virtue of *saddhā* is also much encouraged and it is said that faith in the *Buddha-vachana* ensures rebirth in heaven. *Saddhā* is said to be the first of the five virtues of the disciple, the others being virtuous conduct (*sīla*), self-denial (*chāga*), learning (*suta*) and wisdom (*pañña*). This list occurs in the *Nikāyas* at several places.

It is, of course, true that the faith valued in early Buddhism was not a baseless one (*amūlikā saddhā*), but was a rational faith (*ākāravatī saddhā*) quite compatible with free inquiry and critical examination, but the love of disciples like Sāriputta and Ānanda for their Master was indeed, very deep. As noted above, the idea of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha (*triśaraṇa*) also may be regarded as a forerunner of the devotional surrender of the Mahāyāna. The Buddha is supposed to have observed that "even those who have mere faith and affection in me, they are all bound for heaven." "The fact that the Buddha, despite his initial reluctance to preach, decided to open 'the gate of immortality' to the world out of sheer compassion, may very well be said to constitute the basis for the development of the image of compassionate Bodhisattvas and devotion to them."[1]

Foreign Influences ?

However, despite the presence of these germs of the Mahāyāna in Pali literature, it is hard to believe that they grew up by themselves in such a way that they stood radically against the very fundamentals of the original Dhamma without any external influence. "The differences brought about by the Mahāyāna are too radical to be regarded as merely indigenous developments. For example, the deities who surrounded the Buddha in the Pāli Tripiṭaka were mere accessories. His teachings would not be affected if they were all

[1]Upadhyaya, K. N., 'The Impact of the Bhakti Movement on the Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, p. 352.

removed. But the Bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna came to occupy such a doctrinal importance that in their absence the entire edifice of the Mahāyāna would collapse."[1] The same may be said of the doctrines of Trikāya and bhakti.

Some of the impetus which transformed the nature of Buddhism might have come from foreign sources, though it is a point difficult to be proved. It is well-known that during the period when the Mahāyāna was gradually emerging (300 B.C. to 100 A.D.), Buddhism came into contact with several alien people. Gandhāra had been under Iranian influence till 330 B.C. and in the succeeding centuries. It experienced the invasions and settlements successively of the Greeks, Parthians, Śakas and Kushāṇas. These foreigners were prone to adopt Buddhism rather than Hinduism because it was animated by a missionary zeal and had no prejudice of race or caste. Further, Buddhism not only met the invaders on their entry into India, but sent missionaries to them so that, to some extent, they brought Buddhism with them. In its contacts with alien people Buddhism was a giver than a borrower though it could also have been affected in this communicative process. Probably it thought it better to mould itself to the needs of the situation. The foreign rulers of north-western India were likely·to take more kindly to a theistic religion than to an impersonal system of self-discipline of the Hīnayānist variety. The Indo-Greek ruler Menander was probably a Sarvāstivādin, but the Greek envoy Heliodorus, who visited Besnagar in c. 100 B.C., evidently preferred devotional worship of Vāsudeva. The Śakas and Kushāṇas, who were apparently men of action, showed preference for a religion which satisfied 'the needs of simple humanity' rather than a system which could be understood only by the learned.

That Buddhism came into contact with Zoroasterianism and Christianity can hardly be doubted, though the impact of the latter two on the former can hardly be imagined. It is true that the Greeks, Śakas and Pahlavas had been in close touch with Iran and at a somewhat later time Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Christians met with each other there, as is evident from the religion of Manichaeism which contains elements borrowed from all three, but there is nothing to suggest that Buddhism was influenced to any considerable degree by either Zoroastrianism or Christianity. The Mahāyāna pantheon was well developed before Christianity

[1]*Ibid.*

ceased to be a small sect and some apparent similarities found in the two religions may be explained as coincidences. If there was borrowing at all, it was Christianity which may be regarded as the borrower, as the Christian legend of Barlaam and Josaphat based on the story of the Buddha's 'Great Retirement' indicates.

Impact of Bhāgavatism

Thus, non-Indian influences on Buddhism seem mostly, if at all, to be peripheral contributing nothing to the development of Mahāyāna. The main impetus which brought about the emergence of the Mahāyāna was undoubtedly Brāhmaṇical. The doctrines of the two fold truth, three-fold body and devotion to the bodhisattvas may easily be explained if their origin is sought in the Brāhmaṇical texts. For example, it needs no elucidation that the Buddhists most likely developed the theory of the three-fold body of the Buddha on the Vaishṇavite pattern of the tripartite divinity as (i) Para-Brahman, (ii) Īśvara and (iii) His incarnation or *avatāra*. Similarly in Brāhmaṇism the doctrine of the two-fold truth is as old as the Upanishads. Here it may also be noted that unlike the early Buddhist tradition which had no room for God and other theistic accessories, the Hindu tradition was theistic right from its early Vedic period, so that in the course of its natural development it could more easily evolve a coherent theistic system. On this point, Buddhism could hardly influence the religion of the Brāhmaṇas.

The Mahāyāna doctrine of *bhakti* also appears to be the result of Brāhmaṇical impact on Buddhism. It is obvious that Mahāyāna *bhakti* is saturated with altruistic ethics, exemplified in the firm resolve of the bodhisattvas who postpone their Nirvāṇa indefinitely for the selfless service of humanity. Now this kind of *bhakti*, which is combined with selfless service, is a peculiarity of Bhāgavatism also. As we have shown elsewhere, the roots of *bhakti* go back to the *RV*.[1] Later it expressed itself in two forms, *viz*., Śaivaite and Vaishṇavaite. The early expression of Śaivaite *bhakti*, however, as exhibited in the *Śvetāśvatara*, is mostly unconnected with the doctrine of *nishkāma karman*. The *bhakti* combined with the doctrine of selfless or disinterested service arose first in the Vaishnavaite tradition rather than in the Śaivaite, and was brought into promi-

[1] *RHAI*, II, p. 90 ff.

nence by the followers of the Sātvata Dharma, variously known as Bhāgavata, Nārāyaṇīya, Ekāntika or Pāñcharātra Dharma. Among the early texts of this school are included the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata*. Other works, such as the *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Nārada Pāñcharātra* and the *Nārada-Sūtra*, are of later origin because they clearly make reference to these two early works. Among these two, the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is frequently referred to by the Nārāyaṇīya section, is of greater antiquity. Elsewhere we have shown that it was composed some time between 500 and 400 B.C.[1] In any case it is definitely earlier than the *Baudhāyana D. S.* which explicitly refers to it.[2] Thus in Hinduism the doctrine of *bhakti* coupled with the pursuit of *nishkāma karman* came into existence several centuries before the Christ. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, on the other hand, it finds first detailed exposition in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* which is universally recognized as its most representative work. No other single work of the Mahāyāna literature, even if of earlier origin, brings out the characteristic features of the Mahāyāna as prominently and effectively as this work does. Now, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* was translated into Chinese by Dharmaraksha in 286 A.D. and according to most scholars, such as Nalinaksha Dutt, Winternitz, Narendra Deva, Baladeva Upadhyaya and P. L. Vaidya, the work was composed in the first century A.D.,[3] which seems to be the period when the element of *bhakti* combined with *nishkāma karman* exhibited itself in a full-fledged form in the Buddhist tradition.

The impact of the *Gītā* on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* is too patent to be ignored. As pointed out by K. N. Upadhyaya (1) in utter contrast to early Buddhism and in striking resemblance to the *Gītā* the very form and atmosphere in which the Buddha appears in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* is astonishingly supernatural. Like the cosmic form of Kṛshṇa in the former, he is depicted as shedding resplendent light, dazzling the enormous space from hell to the eighteen thousand regions of Buddhas. (2) Innumerable gods and angels are contained within him and flowers are constantly showered on him from heaven. (3) Again, as in the *Gītā*, even a sinful man is said to be saved by seeking refuge in the Compassionate One. The Lord is said to protect his devotees and is greatly pleased by the different acts of

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Cf. also Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 355.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 354.

piety and worship (*Sadd.* II. 77–98). (4) The Buddha in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* is said to have pointed out the essential unity of three Vehicles (*yānas*), which the Compassionate One is said to have devised through his expedient wisdom (*upāyakauśalya*) to suit the abilities of different kinds of people. It reminds one of the *Gītā* where the three paths of knowledge, devotion, and action are said to be essentially identical, though their expediency differs with the differences in the temperaments and situations of the people. (5) Just as Kṛshṇa says in the *Gītā*: "I am the support, father, mother, and grandfather of the world"..."I am the goal, sustainer, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend" (IX. 17–18), so also the Buddha proclaims in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*: "I am the father of the world, the self-born, lord of all beings and curer of ill." (XV. 21). Again, as Kṛshṇa in the *Gītā* says: "I am alike to all beings, none is favoured or disfavoured by me" (IX. 29), so the Buddha in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* observes: "I do not have to please anyone. I do not favour or disfavour any." (V. 22).

It is difficult to deny that these verses echo the same sentiments and ideas which indicates that the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* was composed under the impact of the *Gītā*.

Antiquity and Original Home of Mahāyāna

Antiquity of Mahāyāna

It is difficult to assign any particular date for the emergence of the Mahāyāna. Its beginning, at least the traces of some of its doctrines, go back to quite early period, though it assumed a definite shape only gradually and not earlier than the close of the first century B.C. According to N. Dutt[1] the crucial test for a particular text to be called Mahāyānic is to ascertain whether or not it teaches *dharmaśūnyatā* alongwith *pudgalaśūnyatā*, incorporates worship of countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas, advocates worship of gods and goddesses and recommends the use of mantras for attaining emancipation. "The earliest text to contain the above mentioned doctrines is the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The first Chinese translation of the text was made in 148 A.D. by Lokarakshā and so we can assume that the original was in existence in the first century A.D.,"[2] though according to a

[1] *AIU*, p. 387.
[2] *Ibid.*

tradition preserved by Tārānātha, the *Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* was composed after the time of Mahāpadma Nanda (4th cent. B.C.).[1] In any case this text, the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* are generally placed in the first century B.C. or shortly after it. From the account of the Fourth Council held in the reign of Kanishka I towards the close of first century A.D. as given by Tārānātha and Paramārtha it appears that the Mahāyāna was then already a living force. Nāgārjuna, the earliest exponent of Mahāyāna, is also generally assigned to the first-second century A.D. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Mahāyāna came into existence in the first century B.C. or the first century A.D.

However, on the basis of the statement made by the Buddha, immediately after the attainment of *sambodhi*, that he was disinclined to impart his subtle teachings to the people at large, the Mahāyānists claim that the Buddha had set in motion the Wheel of Law a second time at Gṛdhrakūṭa to communicate his deeper teachings of Prajñāpāramitānaya to a select few, the bodhisattvas, after he had imparted his less subtle popular ethical teachings to those who were spiritually less advanced, that is, the śrāvakas. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* the words of the Buddha have been slightly modified thus: The Buddha knowledge is too deep and difficult to be realized and comprehended by the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.[2] That is why according to Nāgārjuna the Hīnayāna represents the manifest (*vyakta*) teaching while the Mahāyāna represents the esoteric (*guhya*) doctrines of the Buddha.

The fact seems to be that both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna derived their views from the same teachings of the Master, and it was their interpretation that made their religion different. As shown by N. Dutt,[3] there are in the Pali Nikāyas a few passages which may well be interpreted in the Mahāyānic sense of *dharmaśūnyatā* (non-existence of objects) or *tathatā* (sameness or thatness of worldly objects). In one passage the Truth is said to be beyond fourfold proposition viz. 'after death Tathāgata exists', 'he does not exist', 'he both exists and does not exist' and 'he neither exists nor does not exist'. The Mahāyānists argue that the only conceivable truth be-

[1]*Ibid.*, n. 1.

[2]Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 506.

[3]Dutt, N., *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1973, Ch. II on the Mahāyānic traces in the Nikāyas. Cf. also Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*; Venkataraman, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, 1954 ; *ERE*, VIII, p. 33.

yond this fourfold proposition is the inconceivable, inexpressible unity relating to which none of the four affirmations and negations is applicable.[1] Further, there are also positive assertions of this nature about the Truth in the Pali texts, e.g. "There is the unborn, unoriginating, uncreated, and unconstituted." In another passage, it has been stated that the consciousness (*viññāna*) of an arhat after death is locationless or supportless. The Mahāyānists assert that such passages support their interpretation that the Truth of Reality or Nirvāṇa is the indeterminable, unique, non-dual totality or substratum of objective existences. It is prefectly calm and undisturbed by origination or destruction (*anutpāttika-dharma*)[2]

Original Home of Mahāyāna

According to the *Ashṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*,[3] Mahāyānism had its origin in the South from where it spread to eastern regions, that is Orissa, Bengal and Bihar and then in the North. The Mahāsaṅghikas and their off-shoots, who are grouped with the Hīnayāna but who were in many respects the forerunners of the Mahāyāna, had their principal centre around Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunīkoṇḍa stūpas in Āndhra. Further, the origin of the Mahāyāna is associated with Nāgārjuna who was probably a Brāhmaṇa of Āndhradeśa (or of Vidarbha?) and the centres of whose activities were Śrīparvata and Dhānyakaṭaka.[4] "To clinch the evidence for the place of origin of the Mahāyāna sūtras the Ceylon tradition ascribes the *Ratnakūṭa* to the Āndhras" (the *Ratnakūṭa* being the collection of the earliest extant Mahāyāna sūtras).[5] According to Warder "The idea that the sūtras had been confined to the south would of course have been a convenient way of explaining to Buddhists in the North why it was that they had not heard these texts directly from their own teachers, without admitting that they were recent fabrications."[6] One may conclude with N. Dutt that Mahāyānism originated in the South in Āndhra, reached the North-West by the age of Kanishka I and

[1]*CHI*, I, p 507

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]Quoted in *CHI*, I, p 517, n 15

[4]For Nāgārjuna vide Joshi, L. M., 'Life and Times of the Mādhyamika Philosopher Nāgārjuna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 73, No. 1, pp. 13-20; No. 2, pp. 42-49. Joshi thinks that Nāgārjuna lived for two hundred years from c. 80 B.C. to 120 A.D. !

[5]Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 354 and n 1

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 352.

blossomed first under the care of Nāgārjuna[1] and Maitreyanātha and later on of Āryadeva, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[2]

Main Features of Mahāyāna

Deification of the Buddha

The first main point of difference between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is the concept of the Buddha. For the Theravādins Gautama Buddha was an actual man living on the earth like any other human being, and subject to all frailties of a mortal body. He was no doubt a knower of the world (*lokavidu*), fully awakened one (*Sammāsaṁbuddha*) and unsurpassed (*anuttaro*), but still a mortal, devoid of any transendental or theistic elements. It is indeed true that the Theravādins sometims spoke of the Buddha as identical with Dhamma or as 'no-man', but such statements are only metaphorical, without any metaphysical implication. But within a century after the Buddha, the Theravādins began to look upon him more as a god than as a human being. The Mahāsaṅghikas raised the question whether the attainments of Gautama Siddhārtha and those of his disciples who had become arhats, like Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Mahākaśyapa, were similar. The Theravādins themselves conceded that the Buddha's attainments were much higher than those of arhats, though they also asserted that as far as emancipation from worldly bondage is concerned there is no difference between a Buddha and an arhat. In their texts the special powers attributed to the Buddha which are unattainable by the arhats are the *daśabalas*, four kinds of self confidences, four ways of attaining popularity and eighteen special attributes. In the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the devotees are directed to visit the four places sanctified by the Buddha's birth, attainment of *saṁbodhi*, first preaching of the Dhamma, and demise. Admittedly such directions were later interpolations but, in any case, earlier than the emergence of the Mahāyāna. Hence, it is apparent that the Theravādins had not only conceded the superiority of the Buddha over arhats, but had also started the deification of the Buddha.

[1]Nāgārjuna, the Tāntrika and alchemist contemporary of a Sātavāhana king, was different from Nāgārjuna, the Mādhyamika philosopher.

[2]*AIU*, p. 388. Aśvaghosha, the poet-dramatist, was not an exponent of the Mahāyāna. Aśvaghosha, the Mahāyānist author of the *Śraddhotpādasūtra*, was different from the poet Aśvaghosha and flourished much later.

The deification of the Buddha gave an opportunity to the masses to satisfy their emotional urge. Because in early Buddhism the Buddha was regarded as a human being with *pūtikāya* (a body of impure matter), more importance was given to Dhamma and as the Buddha had himself discouraged the practice of image worship, during the pre-Christian period the devotees had to remain satisfied with making and worshipping symbols only.[1] In the centuries succeeding the birth of Christ the worship of the Buddha and Bodhisattva images came into vogue with the result that the Buddhist devotees covered India with innumerable temples and image-containing vihāras.

The Trikāya Doctrine

The passages in the Pali texts alluding to the supramundane character of the Buddha[2] also gave an opportunity to the Mahāyānists to evolve their theory of Trikāya. The speculations on the kāyas of the Buddha commenced with the Sarvāstivādins but the *Mahāsaṅghikas took this question in right earnest. The* Mahāsaṅghikas preached that Gautama Buddha was not actually born in this world; he made only a show of existence for following the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*). The *Mahāvastu*, an old text of the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādins, claims that "Supra-mundane are the particles of the Exalted. There should not be any doubt that the body of the Sugata . . . is also supra-mundane . . . For following the ways of the world, Buddhas resort to both mundane and supra-mundane concepts." This docetic view of the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādins was shared by the Vaitulyakas whose doctrines have been noticed in the *Kathāvatthu*, the composition of which began in Aśoka's Council. In the *Kathāvatthu* commentary, they are described

[1]Gupta, S K., 'Causes of the Absence of the Buddha Image in Early Indian Art', *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, 1981, pp. 134–9.

[2]For example, where the Buddha says to Ānanda that Dhamma and Vinaya taught by the former would be the teacher of the latter, or the passage where it it said that just as a Brāhmana may say that he is born out of the mouth of Brahmā a Buddhist may say that he is born of Bhagavā, or the *Aṅguttara* passage where the Buddha says that he is neither god or gandhabba, nor a man. However, even though the terms *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* found their way into the later Pali works, yet the Theravādins did not interpret them in non-realistic sense (Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 146). They continued to regard Buddha's *rūpakāya* as that of a human being and the *dhammakāya* as the collection of his teachings.

as Mahāśūnyatāvādins, a common designation of the Mahāyānists.

The Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the doctrine of the Buddhakāya or Dharmakāya into Trikāya doctrine according to which the Rūpa or Nirmāṇakāya (human body) of the Buddha is to be differentiated from his Sambhogakāya (the divine refulgent richly adorned body with all the *mahāpurushalakshaṇas*, roughly corresponding to the concept of god in Brāhmaṇism) and Dharmakāya (cosmic body, roughly corresponding to the concept of Brahman). In the beginning the Kāya doctrine was quite vague, the number and nomenclature of the kāyas uncertain and it did not make much appeal. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, Maitreya and Ruchirketu respectively play the role of the sceptic to ask how could Śākyamuni Gautama perform such great and so many meritorious deeds in such a short life. In answer it is explained that the Tathāgatas have no origin; they have only Dharmakāya; that the Śākyamuni Buddha attained *saṁbodhi* incalculable ages ago and since then has been preaching the Dhamma incessantly. It is only his Nirmāṇakāya that is visible to the people. There are such innumerable Nirmāṇakāyas presiding over countless worlds, Gautama being the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha of saha-lokadhātu.[1] In other words, whatever was done by Śākyamuni was done by the created body of the Buddhakāya or Dharmakāya; Gautama Buddha was only a shadowy image of the Buddhakāya which followed the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*). According to the Chinese sources, Nāgārjuna in his commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā*, also spoke only of two Kāyas—Rūpakāya (human body) and Dharmakāya (metaphysical or cosmic body). According to N. Dutt also upto the time of Nāgārjuna the conception of Sambhogakāya was not distinguished from that of Rūpakāya or Nirmāṇakāya. According to the *Abhisamayālaṅkārakārikā*, however, there are four kāyas of which Svābhāvikakāya is real and the Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya are unreal. The Sambhogakāya is a subtle body which the Buddhas use for imparting higher knowledge to the bodhisattvas. The *Sūtrālaṅkāra* calls it Svābhāvika-Dharmakāya, thus identifying the two.

The concept of the Dharmakāya was of special interest for the Mahāyānists. The *Kārikā* and *Siddhi* call it Svābhāvika or Svabhāvakāya. It is, according to them, immeasurable and illimitable. It fills all space. It is the basis of Sambhoga- and Nirmāṇa kāyas. It is devoid of all marks (*mahāpurushalakshaṇas*) and inexpressible. It is

[1] *CA*, p. 379.

eternal, real and indescribable Absolute. It can be realized in one's own self. "A Buddha is to be seen in the sense of *dharmatā* (nature of dharmas) for the leader (of men) have only Dharmakāya. That *dharmatā* is unknowable (so also is the Tathāgata)." It is one and the same kāya in all the Buddhas. The Chinese commentators of the *Siddhi* state that Dharmakāya is the metaphysical principle of real *chitta* and can be equated with Tathatā, Dharmadhātu or Tathāgatagarbha. The goal of bodhisattva is to realize Dharmakāya.

Thus the Mahāyānists contend that the Buddha only made a show of existence as Siddhārtha Gautama. The various Buddhas, including Gautama Buddha, being identical with Nirvāṇa or Śūnyatā, have no form or body. The body of a Buddha, if any, is the Dharmakāya or Svabhāvakāya, the eternal substances, the cosmic body or the body composed of all substances. The Buddhas appearing in the mortal world are merely phantoms—Nirmāṇakāya created by the real for the benefit of mortals while the Sambhogakāya is the subtle divine god-like aspect of Dharmakāya which the Buddhas use for imparting higher knowledge to the bodhisattvas. The variegated world is an imaginary super-imposition over this Dharmakāya, and the aim of a Mahāyānist is to realize this fact of super-imposition or non-existence of the phenomenal world.

The Bodhisattva Doctrine and Bhakti

The conception of Bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna was a corollary to its Buddhological speculation. The Hīnayānists believe that only Gautama Buddha was born as bodhisattva in his previous existences, commencing with his birth as Sumedha Brāhmaṇa (when he was told by Dīpaṅkara Buddha that he would ultimately attain sambodhi and become a Buddha) up to his last existence in the Tushita heaven, just before his descent to the mortal world. As a bodhisattva, he lived the life of an average being acquiring merits and avoiding demerits as far as possible. In some existences he sacrificed everything, including his body, in order to acquire the six (or ten) supreme virtues (*pāramitās*). According to the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādins, in his last existence as Siddhārtha-Gautama he was not conceived in the womb, nor was he actually born like an ordinary human being. He only made a show of being a mortal including the shows of being ignorant, leading a family life, and making efforts for emancipation, and so forth.[1]

[1]Bennett, A. A. G., 'The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 71,

The Mahāyānists developed the Hīnayānist conception of bodhisattva. They argued that there were among the worldly beings such individuals who are in a position to develop *bodhichitta,* fulfil the *pāramitās* and become a buddha. The development of *bodhīchitta* requires that the adept must dedicate himself in his several lives to the service of others, and should not desire his own emancipation unless and until all others have attained it, because seeking one's own emancipation before others would prove that he has not developed the virtue of self-sacrifice to the fullest extent. According to the Mahāyānists, the bodhisattvas are as incalculable as atoms in the sand of the Gaṅgā. In fact theoretically every Mahāyānist is a bodhisattva. Some of the bodhisattvas have been given concrete forms and qualities. In the earlier Mahāyāna texts, emphasis is more on qualities than on forms, while in the later texts the emphasis is reversed. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, the *Karaṇḍavyūha,* and other texts are described the powers and virtues of several bodhisattvas who, on their own accord, decided to continue to remain as such and not become a buddha, for otherwise they would have attained the metaphysical state which is beyond merit or demerit, and would not have been in a position to exercise *maitrī* (love) and *karuṇā* (compassion) and serve the suffering beings of the world. Among them are included Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, Bhaishajyarāja, Mahāsthānaprāpta, Samantabhadra, Maitreya. etc., who are worshipped and adored as gods. In course of time they were given definite forms, and insignia for purposes of worship with elaborate rituals and mythological conceptions were woven around them much on the same lines as around the Brāhmaṇical gods. Thus the bodhisattva doctrine introduced and strengthened the element of devotion *(bhakti)* and worship in Buddhism.

With this conception of bodhisattva, the Mahāyāna writers have chalked out in detail the career of a bodhisattva in which they have laid stress not only on the fulfilment of the *pāramitās*, but also on several forms of meditation with a view to training the mind for the realization of *dharmaśūnyatā* or *tathatā.* Thus, it becomes apparent how did the Mahāyānists magnify the Hīnayānist conception of bodhisattva.

In order to determine the period when the bodhisattva conception originated, we have to ascertain the time of the composition of

No. 6, pp. 123–32; Majumdar, A. K., *Concise History of Ancient India,* III, 1983, p. 405 ff.

the Jātakas and Avadānas, which contain the Hīnayānist account of the various existences of the Buddha as bodhisattva. In the Pali texts neither the conception of bodhisattva nor the doctrine of the *pāramitās* is mentioned. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* and other suttas are completely unaware of them. According to N. Dutt, "It seems that only in the post-Aśokan days the bodhisattva conception was engrafted on the original teachings of the Buddha and this led to the composition of the Jātakas and the Avadānas. The Jātaka stories were included in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* of some of the sects other than Theravāda, and appear intermixed with the life of Gautama Buddha, before as well as after his attainment of *bodhi*. In the Pāli Piṭakas, these have been collected to form an independent text while the Sanskritists i.e. the Sarvāstivādins, compiled the Avadānas which contained the accounts of the previous lives not only of Gautama Buddha, but also of his noted disciples and devotees. The Jātakas and Avadānas furnished the motifs to the sculptors of the Bharhut and Sanchi railings, which are dated about the second or first century B.C. So the origin of the *bodhisattva* conception, along with the composition of the Jātakas and Avadānas, may be placed between the third and second century B.C. It must be some time after this date that the Mahāyānists developed their conception of *bodhisattva* and converted it into a creed known as Bodhisattvayāna."[1]

Daśabhūmis : The Scheme of Spiritual Advancement

In spite of their extremely altruistic ideals, the Mahāyānists did not reject the scheme of progressive spiritual advancement prescribed by the Hīnayānists. In the Mahāyāna texts like the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* and the *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, the course of training to be adopted by a bodhisattva is given in detail. It is said that it is not possible to acquire all virtue-perfections (*pāramitās*) in one life. It is in and through his several existences that a bodhisattva perfects himself in the six virtue-perfections or *pāramitās*, namely charity (*dāna*), observance of precepts (*śīla*), perseverance or forbearance (*kshānti*), energy (*vīrya*), meditational exercises (*dhyāna*), and knowledge (*prajñā*), attains several other virtues and powers, prac-

[1]*CHI*, I, p. 512; cf. Bhagawat, N. K., 'Did the Buddha Kill the Child in Man (Bhūṇa)', *B. C. Law Volume*, II, pp 61–75. He argues that the teachings of Gautama did not tend to kill 'Child in Man', but rather helped to build it up for the altruistic ideal of serving others.

tises various kinds of meditation and develops his intellectual powers. Gradually he progresses from one *bhūmi* (stage of spiritual progress) to another till he reaches the tenth *bhūmi* (according to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, twelve), where he attains *bodhi* (perfect knowledge)[1] and becomes a *Samyaksambuddha.*

The early stages of the spiritual progress in the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are almost similar. The most difficult task of an adept in both is the fulfilment of the condition laid down for passing from the pre-spiritual stage of a common man of the world (called the stage of *pṛthagjana* in the Hīnayāna and *prakṛticharyā* in the Mahāyāna) to that of an Ārya (a man capable of attaining the highest truth). The Hīnayānists maintain that a *pṛthagjana* must comprehend the Four Noble Truths and have firm faith in the teachings of the Buddha and get rid of the belief in the existence of self before he becomes a Sotapanna or Śrota-āpanna (i.e. one who is on the stream of nirvāṇa).[2] The Mahāyānists insist that one must develop bodhichitta before he leaves the stage of *prakṛticharyā* and becomes an Ārya or bodhisattva, that is the one who is entitled to commence the cultivation of *bhūmis* (called *bodhi-prasthāna*). In the Hīnayāna a Sotapanna reduces his *rāga*, *dvesha* and *moha* to the minimum by ethical and meditational practices (*śīla*) and enters the second stage of *sakṛdgāmin*. On the complete removal of all these three by the prefection of *chitta* or *samādhi* he enters the third stage of *anāgāmin* and on attaining the perfection in *prajñā* i.e. realization of truth he removes all the *kleśāvaraṇas*, realizes *pudgala-śūnyatā* and becomes an arhat. In the Mahāyāna texts such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of Asaṅga, the *Mahāvastu* and the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, a similar course for the bodhisattva is chalked out. After leaving the state of *prakṛticharyā* the bodhisattvas gradually pass through three stages in order to purify themselves in acts and speech (*adhiśīla*, corresponding to *sīla* of the Hīnayāna), acquire complete control over mind (*adhichitta*, corresponding to *chitta* of the Hīnayāna) and acquire an analytical knowledge of the constituents of a being or of the world (*adhiprajñā*, corresponding to *prajñā* of the Hīnayāna). On completion of these three, the bodhisattvas, like the śrāvakas, attain *nirodha* (removal) of *kleśāvaraṇa* (veil of impurities).[3] In the Mahāyāna texts these four stages are

[1] *CHI*, I, p. 480.
[2] Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 92 f.
[3] *CHI*, I, p. 515.

divided into six *bhūmis*, respectively called *Pramuditā* (joyous stage), *Vimalā* (immaculate stage), *Prabhākarī* (stage of illumination), *Archishmatī* (radiant stage), *Sudurjayā* (hard to win stage) and *Abhimukhī* (the stage when the bodhisattva is right in front of *bodhi*). Till this point the career of a bodhisattva is virtually no different from the career of a Hīnayānist śrāvaka. It is in the next four higher stages that the bodhisattvas acquire the special powers of a buddha, realize sameness (*tathatā*) of all phenomenal objects, and prepare themselves as teachers of the world.

The four higher stages for the realization of *tathatā* or *dharma-śūnyatā*, through the removal of *jñeyāvarana* (the veil which covers the truth) are the last four *bhūmis*. Thus the higher Mahāyānic practices commence after adhiprajñāvihāra, i.e. in the seventh *bhūmi* called *Durañgamā* (far going stage). Hence onward the bodhisattva continues the practice of the four brahma-vihāras, viz. *maitrī* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (joy at others' success), and *upekshā* (equanimity), tries to realize the substancelessness (*nairātmya*) and non-duality (*advaya*) of all objective existences, and tries to visualize the cosmic body (*Dharmakāya*) of the Buddha. He follows the ways of the world, but remains dissociated from them. He now goes beyond the śrāvaka and pratyeka-buddha stages.[1]

In the eighth *bhūmi* called *Achalā* (immovable stage) the bodhisattva attains the knowledge of sameness (*tathatā*) of all objects, gives up all thought-constructions, and is thoroughly convinced of the non-origination of all wordly objects (*anutpattika-dharmakshānti*). He then attains the special powers of the buddhas. He now knows where and when he will become a Buddha. Now he makes only a show of observing the rules of conduct and is almost omniscient, having a detailed analytical knowledge of everything.

In the ninth *bhūmi* called *Sādhumati* (stage of good thought) the bodhisattva develops the *daśabala* of a buddha, perfect wisdom and the faculty of minutely observing the mental inclinations of different beings. He prepares himself to devise ways and means (*upāyakauśalya*) for helping them in their spiritual advancement. Thus now he perfects himself for the task of leading all beings to nirvāṇa.

In the tenth or the last *bhūmi* called *Dharma Meghā* (cloud of law) or *Abhishekabhūmi* he becomes omniscient, perfect in all meditational exercises. He attains perfection in knowledge (*prajñā pāramitā*). Now his Dharmakāya is complete. He becomes possessed

[1]For details, see Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 86 f.

of the resplendent body from which issue forth rays of light to illuminate the whole universe and make all beings happy. At this stage he receives consecration (*abhisheka*) as a buddha, a tathāgata, from all the Buddhas. Thus ends the career of a bodhisattva.[1]

Mahāyāna Pantheon and Mode of Worship

In the Hīnayāna Buddhism there was no systematic pantheon. The early Buddhist texts sometimes refer to thirty-three gods of the Brāhmaṇical religion and some other deities. They are said to reside in the Trāyatriṁśa heaven.[2] But the Buddha did not encourage their worship. That is why in early Buddhism neither the Buddha and nor any other deity was worshipped in the form of images; only stūpas and other symbols of the Buddha were paid respect. But in the Mahāyāna a large number of deities were conceived. Their number grew larger in the Tāntrika Buddhism. In the Mahāyāna individual soul is known as *bodhichitta* while the universal soul is called *śūnya*. The deities play their role when these two combine in the state of meditation.

With the Mahāyānic conception of the *lokottara* nature of the Buddha and also the development of the bodhisattva doctrine a well-defined and well-classified pantheon and concept of heavens and hells came into being.[3] The *Guhyasamāja*, probably for the first time, describes the five Dhyānī Buddhas (representing the five skandhas), namely Vairochana, Akshobhaya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi, and their mantras, maṇḍalas (circles of deities) and Śaktis (female counterparts). The five Dhyānī-Buddhas issued out of Ādi-Buddha through contemplation. The emanations or offsprings of these Dhyānī Buddhas constitute the families (*kulas*) of gods and goddesses. The five *kulas* are *dvesha*, *moha*, *rāga*, *chintāmaṇi* and *samaya*. Each deity of these families was given various forms, colours, companions, etc. In the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Amitābha Buddha appears for the first time as the presiding deity of the Sukhāvatī heaven, where he brought Avalokiteśvara, the personification of compassion, into existence. Fa-hsien mentions the

[1]Dutt, *op. cit.*; cf. Kak, R. N., 'Religious Growth in the Mahāyāna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 72, Nos. 3–4, pp. 59–64.

[2]Cf. Haldar, J. R., 'Characteristics of Buddhist Gods in Pali Literature', *JAIH*, V, pp. 33–35.

[3]Cf. Haldar, J. R., 'Links between Early and Later Buddhist Mythology', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, pp. 142–157,

names of Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and the future Buddha Maitreya, while Yuan Chwang refers to Avalokiteśvara, Hārīti, Kshitigarbha, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, Padmapāṇi, Vaiśravaṇa, Śākya Buddha, Śākya Bodhisattva, and Yama together with several deified saints. Mañjuśrī was a popular bodhisattva. He was regarded as ever young (Kumārabhūta), the personification of wisdom and was usually associated with Lakshmī or Sarasvatī or both. Among goddesses Tārā was the most popular. She was regarded as the personification of *prajñā*; hence she is also called goddess Prajñāpāramitā.

According to the Chinese pilgrims, the Hīnayānist monks and nuns usually made offerings at stūpas, while the Mahāyānists paid homage to the images of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other gods and goddesses. The first Buddha images were conceived and made either in Gandhāra or Mathurā as a result of the Mahāyānic ideology, probably in the beginning of the Christian era. The Mahāyānists built temples for these images and carried them out in processions. I-tsing gives an account of the daily ceremony of the bathing and worshipping of the images.

Mahāyāna Monastic Life

Unlike the Hīnayāna, the Mahāyāna did not insist on a person becoming a monk or nun and allowed even an animal to begin the career of a bodhisattva. Probably that is why in the collection of the Mahāyāna texts there is no *Vinaya Piṭaka*.[1] In the later texts such as the *Sikshāsamuchchaya*, the *Bodhicharyāvatāra* and the *Bodhisattva prātimokshasūtra* there are only some rules of general nature. From them it appears that the Mahāyāna monks followed the general rules of the Hīnayāna in their monastic life, modifying some of them according to their needs. That is why, as Yuan Chwang reports, the monks of both the sects lived together in a number of monasteries. I-tsing, however, refers to some differences between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna monks regarding the eating of meat, though he also notes that generally everywhere the Mahāyānist monks followed the Hīnayānist *Vinaya*. The additional features of the Mahāyānist way of life such as having a spiritual guide (*kalyāṇamitra*), practising four kinds of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*), learning the ways of good conduct (*bhadracharyā*), practising worship (*vandanā*) of and devotion (*śraddhā*) to the Buddha

[1]Vide Chakrabortty (*op. cit.*, pp. 299–333) for a detailed study of the Mahāyāna monkish discipline.

images and chaityas, entreating Buddhas to be the guide of all beings, etc. did not create any difficulty in the adoption of the rules of the Hīnayānic *Vinaya*. However, it should be remembered that the Mahāyānists theoretically believed that all these rules were mere expedients (*upāyakauśalya*) adopted by the Teacher in order to attract the uninitiated into his way of thinking. When these rules had served the purpose of elevating the *chitta* of the uninitiated, their utility was exhausted. Then the initiated were told that the rules they had so long practised were unreal, and they should regard them as *śūnya*, as mirage, a dream.

Philosophy and Literature of Mahāyāna

The Mādhyamika School

In course of time the Mahāyānist philosophers became divided into two schools: Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra. Nāgārjuna was probably the founder and the earliest exponent of the Mādhyamika doctine of Śūnyatā though Takakusu believes that Aśvaghosha, the author of the *Śraddhotpādasūtra*, preached the philosophy of *ālaya-vijñāna* (store-consciousness) and the sameness (*tathatā*) of all things of the world earlier than him. Nāgārjuna was born in a Brāhmaṇa family of Āndhra[1] or Vidarbha about the first or second century A.D.,[2] and was well-versed in the Brāhmaṇical Śāstras. He became a bhikshu and was for a long time the abbot of the Nālandā monastery which acquired great fame during his leadership. His commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Pañchaviṁśatisāhasrikā*), entitled *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, is a monumental work on Hīnayānic and Mahāyānic lore which is now available only in its Chinese translation rendered by Kumārajīva. Its gist is found in his *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. The principal object of these texts is to establish that any

[1]Joshi, *Studies*, p. 3.

[2]Dutt, N., *CHI*, I, p. 480. For the date of Nāgārjuna see Rao, B. S. L. Hanumanta, 'The Contemporaneity of Kaniṣka and Nāgārjuna', *JAHRS*, XXVIII, Pts. 3–4, pp. 23–29. He suggests that Kanishka I ascended the throne in 130/4 A.D. and that Nāgārjuna flourished at his court. See also, Lal, G. Jawahar, 'Was Kaniṣka a Patron of the Buddhist Philosopher Nāgārjuna?', *ibid.*, XXX, Pts. 1–4, pp. 21–31. He places Kanishka in 78 A.D. and makes Nāgārjuna his contemporary. For the study of the theory that Nāgārjuna was a contemporary of Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi vide Nema, S. R., 'Nāgārjuna and his Contemporary Sātavāhana King', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVI, No. 1, pp. 23–31.

positive description of Reality or Śūnyatā is impossible; at the most one can describe it by negating everything conceivable. All so-called objects and qualities—*nirvāṇa*, buddha, or bodhisattva—are non-existent in the highest sense (*paramārtha*) (*śūnyāḥ sarvadharmā niḥsvabhāvayogena*). Nāgārjuna held that the phenomenal world is a misconceived super-imposition on the Reality or Śūnyatā. In answer to the question as to why did the Buddha teach all the spiritual practices and analyse the phenomenal objects if they are all mere figment of imagination, Nāgārjuna says that the teachings of the Buddha are dependent on two kinds of truth: one is the worldly conventional truth, and the other is the highest Truth (*paramārtha*), the Absolute. The conventional truth differentiates between the recipient and the received, subject and object; it acts only as a cover of the Truth and is not the Truth in itself. The Buddha did not preach anything about Reality. Actually he never preached any doctrine to anybody. Therefore, what an aspirant for the realization of the truth of *śūnyatā* should do is to dissociate himself completely from worldly things, be it the gross worldly pleasure or the highest attainments of an arhat, bodhisattva, or buddha.

The successor of Nāgārjuna was Āryadeva (second century A.D.) who was a foster-son of a king of Siṁhala. He wrote several treatises, one of which, the *Chatuḥśataka* has been preserved in Sanskrit. His disciple was Mātṛcheṭa (alias Durdharsha Kāla, alias Pitṛcheṭa), a great scholar of the Brāhmaṇical lore. After his defeat at the hands of Āryadeva he became a great Mahāyāna preacher and composed several works. His contemporary Rāhulabhadra was a Śūdra disciple of Āryadeva. He was a devotee of Amitābha Buddha. Between Āryadeva and Saṅgharakshita (beginning of the 5th cent. A.D.) no contribution of note seems to have been made by the intervening teachers to the Mādhyamika system. In the fifth century Kumārajīva propagated Mādhyamika system in China and Buddhapālita, who hailed from Dantapura (Kaliṅga), wrote a commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* of Nāgārjuna, while his contemporary Bhāvaviveka wrote a similar commentary called *Prajñāpradīpa*. Buddhapālita established the *śūnyatā* doctrine by *prāsaṅgika* method while Bhāvaviveka adopted the *svātantrika* method. Among other famous teachers of this system was Chandrakīrtti who is regarded as the incarnation of Buddhapālita. He was a rival of Chandragomin of the Yogāchāra school. His successors were Dharmapāla (635 A.D.), Jayadeva and Śāntideva. Śāntideva

was a prince from Saurāshṭra and the author of a large number of works including the *Śikshāsamuchchaya* and the *Bodhicharyāvatāra*.

The Yogāchāra School

Yogāchāra is the second school of Mahāyāna philosophy. It appeared some time after Nāgārjuna. According to Takakusu the earliest treatise dealing with its philosophy is the *Śraddhotpādasūtra* of Aśvaghosha composed about 1st cent. A.D., but such an antiquity for this work is not generally accepted.

The earliest exponent of this school of philosophy was probably Maitreyanātha of Ayodhyā (c. 270–350 A.D.). Tāranātha and Buston identify him with Maitreya, the future Buddha. His disciple was Asaṅga (c. 310–390 A.D.) who systematized and developed his thoughts; and then Asaṅga's brother Vasubandhu dealt with this philosophy more scientifically. Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were the sons of a court-priest of Purushapura. Asaṅga was formerly a member of the Mahīśāsaka sect. Later he became a disciple of Maitreyanātha, wrote commentaries on the works of his teacher and persuaded his younger brother Vasubandhu, an intellectual giant of the age, to give up his faith in Sarvāstivāda and espouse the cause of the Yogāchāra. Vasubandhu became a great exponent of Vijñānavāda.[1] Among his disciples were included Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Diṅnāga, Saṅghadāsa, Dharmapāla, etc. Guṇamati's disciple was the famous scholar Paramārtha of Ujjayinī. A great name of the period is that of Chandragomin, the disciple of Sthiramati. All these great scholars composed a large number of works on philosophy, metaphysics, logic, grammar, etc.

The difference between the Mādhyamika and the Yogāchāra philosophy is very subtle, as the Yogāchāra conception of nirvāṇa or *tathatā* and the non-existence of the phenomenal world is almost similar to that of the Mādhyamikas. The Yogāchārins support the Mādhyamika view that the external world is non-existing. However, they hold that it is a mere ideation or extension of the *chittamātra* or *vijñānamātra*. They believe that the diversified world is the mental creation of a being in whose mind from times immemorial some ideas, desires, and misapprehensions are stored up. They do not

[1]For the view that there were two scholars of this name vide Frauwallner, E., *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of Law Vasubandhu*, 1951; Goyal, S. R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, pp. 214–6.

dismiss the world as absurd or as non-existent as a barren woman's son, but regard it as a snake super-imposed on the rope. They concede a certain amount of reality to the snake but only as long as the actual identity of the snake and the rope is not established.

The Yogāchārins developed the doctrine of the three kinds of bodies or kāyas of the Buddha, namely *nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *dharmakāya* (*supra*). The first *kāya* (body) is apparitional; the second, though apparitional, is caused and conditioned by the accumulated merits of a bodhisattva; and the third is the real one and without any characteristics.

Mahāyāna Literature

The Mahāyānists do not question the authenticity of the Hīnayāna Tripiṭaka. But they have produced quite a voluminous literature of their own for popularising their own ideals and teachings. Most of the earlier Mahāyāna texts are attributed to the Buddha himself who is said to have given his Mahāyānic discourses only at Gṛdhrakūṭa. Each text is introduced by the words '*Evam mayā śrutam*' (Thus have I heard) and it is claimed that the audience included not only the bodhisattvas but also distinguished śrāvakas and lay upāsakas. The earlier Mahāyāna texts usually reproduce all the dharmas dealt with in the Hīnayāna Piṭakas, but only to prove that they are useful to a certain extent; when the bodhisattvas go beyond the Hīnayāna *bhūmis*, they should regard them as mirage and should give them up.

The basic, oldest, most famous and most representative text of the Mahāyānists is the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, of which there are several versions, large (the biggest is said to be in one lakh ślokas), medium, and small (the smallest being of one śloka only); but all of them emphasize the same theme, viz. *dharma-śūnyatā*.

Equally important are the nine sacred texts famous in Nepal. They are : *Lalitavistara*, *Samādhirājasūtra*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Daśabhūmika*, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, and *Tathāgataguhyaka*. Equally famous are *Sukhāvatīvyūha* or the *Aparimitāyus-sūtra*, the *Karaṇḍavyūha* and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. The *Aparimitāyus-sūtra* or *Sukhāvatīvyūha* contains an account of Amitābha and his paradise while the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, which is also an old text, argues that though the śrāvakas make some spiritual progress yet they need further training for the realization of the highest Truth. An impor-

tant place in early Mahāyāna literature is occupied by the *Avadānas* and the works of Aśvaghosha and Mātṛcheṭa.

A large number of Mahāyāna texts were translated into Chinese during the Western Tsin Dynasty (265–316 A.D.), including the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* which describes the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of spiritual progress of a bodhisattva, and the *Śamādhirājasūtra* which deals with the conception of the highest meditation leading to the realization of *śūnyatā*. The work of translating the Mahāyāna texts into Chinese continued for about a thousand years more. The Tibetans began the work of translation much later than the Chinese, but almost equalled the achievements of the latter in this field.

The Mahāyānists attached great significance to magical spells and charms. These were collected together in the treatises called *dhāraṇīs*. The spells and charms were not unknown to the Hīnayānists. But these were few in number and were probably adaptations of pre-Buddhist Vedic or non-Vedic spells and charms. In Mahāyānism, the *dhāraṇīs* occupied an important place and, in course of time, overshadowed the ethical and philosophical doctrines.

With the growth of Mahāyāna, Buddhism tended to return to the mainstream of Indian culture. The adoption of Sanskrit for literary and scholastic purposes, employment of the style and the method of the Purāṇas, the concept of heavens and hells, emergence of a Buddhist pantheon and the hierarchy of divinities and the emphasis on *bhakti*, all these features of Mahāyāna brought it considerably near to Brāhmaṇism. It showed and proved that Buddhism was not a different religion : it was merely an aspect, a facet of Hinduism.

Chapter 13

TĀNTRIKA BUDDHISM

From the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha to the sack of Nālandā by the Muslims in c. 1197 A.D., that is in about seventeen centuries, Indian Buddhism passed through three main phases—Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna (Esoteric or Tāntrika Buddhism), each with its own characteristic features and ideals. But these phases were not mutually exclusive. Each earlier *yāna* besides continuing to exist independently was also partially incorporated in the later one.

Tāntrika Literature

The Buddhist Tantras of the Vajrayāna phase constitute a vast literature, of which the most extensive portion now extant, counting basic works and commentaries, is among the Tibetan translations from Sanskrit in the Kanjur and Tanjur, supplemented by a huge Tibetan indigenous literature. The *Guhyasamāja-tantra*, *Hevajratantra*, *Śrīchakra-saṁbhāratantra*, *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṁgraha*, *Kālachakra-tantra*, *Tārātantrā* and *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* are well-known Buddhist Tāntrika texts. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is a Mantrayāna text. The *Sādhanamālā* is a collection of 312 short texts of Vajrayāna ritual and worship written mostly by the Buddhist *siddhas* whose number is said to be 84. The *Dohākośa* of Sarahapāda, *Jñānsiddhi* of Indrabhūti, *Prajñopāyaviniśchayasiddhi* of Anaṅgavajra, the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* of Nāropā, the *Advayavajrasaṁgraha* of Advayavajra, *Advayasiddhi* of Lakshmī, *Sahajasiddhi* of Doṁbī Heruka, and a number of songs (*dohās*) of esoteric teachers of Buddhist tradition have been published in modern times.

The study of Tantras is beset with unusual difficulties. Most of this literature could be called neutral as far as history is concerned. That is to say, it neither actively seeks to preserve accurate chronicles, nor does it intentionally attempt to fabricate them. Like most other authors of ancient Indian religious texts the human authors of the Buddhist Tantras omitted their personal names and ascribed the authorship to a celestial Buddha. Their language and style also cause

considerable difficulties. While resembling the sūtras in literary form they differ from them in dealing with ritual and yoga rather than with ethics and philosophy and in being unintelligible without the traditional commentary. Moreover, the techniques they prescribe can be practised only when, through the rite of *abhisheka*, the requisite spiritual power has been transmitted to the disciple by the guru.[1]

The Buddhist Tantras have been classified variously. According to one classification they belong to four categories :

(i) *Kriyā-tantras*, which treat ceremonies at the building of temples, erection of the images of gods, etc.;

(ii) *Charyā-tantras*, which treat the practical cult;

(iii) *Yoga-tantras*, which deal with the practice of Yoga; and

(iv) *Anuttara-yoga-tantras*, which deal with higher mysticism.

According to another classification all the tantras belong to five classes : (1) Kriyā-tantra, (2) Yoga-tantra, (3) Mahāyoga-tantra, (4) Anuyoga-tantra, and (5) Atiyoga-tantra.

According to Hajime Nakamura,[2] a still another classification is possible in terms of form, although not exactly systematized :

(1) *Mūla-tantra*.

(2) *Laghu-tantra* or *Alpa-tantra*. A *Mūla-tantra* is the *nirdeśa* (explanation) while the *Laghu-tantra* is the *uddeśa* (enumeration of the subject-matter).

(3) *Ākhyāta-tantra*. Explanatory of another *tantra*.

(4) *Uttara-tantra*. Commentarial.

(5) *Uttarottara-tantra*. Placed after *Uttara-tantra* and also commentarial.

Meaning and Nature of Tāntrikism

Meaning of Tāntrikism

The Tantra influenced the Buddhists and the Hindus alike. In essentials the Tantras of the Buddhists, Śaivas, Śāktas, and the Bhāgavatas show a remarkable agreement in theory and practice; the only difference is of terminology and of background and tradition. It was during the Tāntrika age that Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist

[1]Sangharakshita, Bhikshu, in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. by A. L. Basham, p. 92.

[2]Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987, p. 332.

traditions completely coalesced and gave birth to what is now called Hinduism. The first European scholar who rehabilitated the Tantras (especially the Hindu Tantras of the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga) in modern times was Sir John Woodroffe, who published his famous series of works on Tāntrikism under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon.[1]

Tāntrikism has excited contradictory attitudes and evaluations in modern times. Some scholars condemn it as magical, superstitious, and obscene whereas others consider it as scientific and profoundly spiritual. The word *tantra* means a text as well as a system of *sādhanā* and *siddhi*. Monier-Williams in his *Dictionary* describes the tantras as a class of works teaching magical and mystical formularies. In the Vedic texts the word *tantra* occurs in the sense of a loom. The *Śrautasūtras* use the word in the sense of a process of work containing many parts. In the Mīmāṁsā tradition also *tantra* is an act-process—a method of doing or making something. In the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali the word *tantra* signifies a branch of knowledge, while the writers on the sciences of polity and medicine use the word *Tantraniryukti* to mean 'canons', 'propositions', 'principles', 'expositions', etc.[2] It is also used for a book (e.g. The *Pañcha-tāntra*). The *Amarakosha* refers to the various scientific treatises as *tantrāṇi*[3] and Śaṅkara uses the word *tantra* in the sense of a philosophical system.[4] In the religious sense Tantra first came to mean 'the scripture by which knowledge is spread' (*tanyate vistāryate jñānam anena iti tantram*).[5]

In the *Kāśikāvṛtti* the word '*tantra*' is derived from the root *tan*, to spread, though some later writers derive it from the root *tatṛ* or *tantṛ* meaning origination or knowledge. In the next stage it was defined as a class of texts which promulgates profound matters concerning *tattva* (science of the cosmic principles) and *mantra* (the

[1]For a detailed study of Tāntrika Buddhism see B. Bhattacharya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, 1980; S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism*, 1974; *Obscure Religious Cults*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1962; P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantra*, Part I, Calcutta, 1939; G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 2 Vols., Roma, 1949; *Minor Buddhist Texts*, 2 Parts, Roma, 1956, 1958; David Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya*, Oxford, 1957; Poussin, *s. v.*, Tāntrism, *ERE*. For other references, see Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987.

[2]Bhattacharya, N. N., *History of Tāntric Religion*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 1 f.; cf. Sharma, D. B. Sen, *Studies in Tantra Yoga*, Karnal, 1985, Ch. I.

[3]Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 235.

[4]Bagchi, P. C., 'Evolution of the Tantras', *CHI*. IV, p. 211.

[5]Cf. Goyal, *RHAI*, I, p. 336.

science of mystic sound) (*Kāmikāgama*).[1]

Basic Tenets of Tantra

The religion expounded in the Tantras is "a peculiar mixture of mystic syllables (*mantras*), magical diagrams (*yantras*), ritualistic circles (*maṇḍalas*), physical gestures (*mudrās*), sex-play (*maithuna*), psycho-physical discipline (*yoga*), a fearful pantheon, elaborate worship and ritualism, magical sorcery, necromancy, symbolism, astrology, alchemy, coefficiency of female element and a monistic philosophy. The affirmation of the material world; the dogma that all gods together with the supreme truth reside in the human body; the assumption of the principle of an apparent duality in an essential non-duality; the dogma of the coefficient female partner (*śakti-sāhacarya*) as a *sine qua non* in the process of liberation; a radical ethics that every thing is pure for a pure man or *omnia sancta sanctis*; and, above all, the concept of the *summum bonum* of life in terms of the Great Delight (*mahāsukha*) born of the union (*yab-yum*) of 'male' (*upāya*) and 'female' (*prajñā*)—would appear to be some of the fundamental postulates of 'Tāntrikism' or 'Esoterism' of the Buddhists and the Hindus alike."[2] In Tāntrikism debased practices like the use of five *makāras* (i.e. the five practices the names of which begin with the letter '*ma*'), that is the use of *madya* (wine), *māṁsa* (flesh), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (finger gestures or physical postures) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse) were openly recommended and were apparently indulged in even by men who supposedly led highly religious lives. In the *Guhyasamāja*, not only falsehood and theft but even murder is recommended.

A fair idea of the general Tāntrika principles may be had from the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, one of the most popular and well-known Tāntrika texts. According to it Brahman is nothing but Śakti, the eternal dynamic source of all beings. "It is perceived that all life proceeds from the womb of a woman; so we should think of the ultimate creative principles in terms of the 'mother' and not of the 'father'. Philosophical concepts like Prakṛiti and Māyā, and mythological figures like Pārvatī, Durgā, Lakshmī and Rādhā constitute the female principle of creation, and are merely different names of the Jaganmātā (Mother of the Word). All gods, including Brahmā,

[1]Joshi, *op. cit.*; cf. Sharma, D. B. Sen, *Studies in Tantra Yoga*, Karnal, 1985, p. 1.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 236.

Vishṇu, and Śiva, are contained in and issue out of the Divine Mother. This sect, therefore, looks upon every woman as an incarnation of the Universal Mother."[1] In Buddhist Tāntrikism Upāya and Prajñā correspond to the Hindu principles of Śiva and Śakti respectively.[2] When Śiva is worshipped, His consort is also worshipped; for the two are inseparable. For the same reason, when Śakti is worshipped Śiva is also worshipped.[3]

Thus Śaktivāda forms the corner-stone of the philosophy of all the branches of the Tantras. The activities of Śakti, the Primordial Female Energy, underlie the variegated forms and phenomena of the universe. It is through these forms that man can ascend and find his consummation with the Universal Principle.[4]

Origin of Tāntrikism

Was Tāntrikism Foreign in Origin?

According to several scholars Tāntrikism was of foreign origin. H. P. Sastri believed that "Tantra came from outside India. Most probably it came with the Māgī priests of the Scythians." Bhattacharya opines that "The introduction of Śakti worship in religion is so un-Indian that we are constrained to admit it as an external or foreign influence."[5] P. C. Bagchi also points out to some possible foreign elements, specially Tibetan, in the Tantras. He feels that the mystics of India used to have regular intercourse with Tibet; it is for this reason that we find in the Tantras vestiges of Lamāist doctrines.[6] In recent years Alex Wayman has attempted to prove the existence of some Graeco-Roman concepts in the Buddhist Tantras.[7] But most of the scholars generally trace the origin of Tāntrikism in the pre-Buddhist religion of India. According to John Woodroffe, Tantra is that development of the Vaidika karmakāṇḍa which under the name of the Tantraśāstra is the scripture of the Kali age.[8] According

[1] *HK*, p. 31.
[2] *RHAI*, I, p. 344 ff.
[3] *CHI*, IV, p. 250.
[4] Yadava, B.N.S., *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973, p. 361 f.
[5] Quoted in *Studies*.
[6] Bagchi, P. C., *Studies in the Tantras*, 1975, p. 55.
[7] Wayman, Alex, *The Buddhist Tantras*, pp. 19-23.
[8] Woodroffe *Principles of Tantra*, p. xxviii.

to Charles Eliot Tāntrikism is a species of religious magic, rather than principle.[1] Monier-Williams sees the origin of Tāntrikism in the popularity of the Sāṅkhya theory of Purusha and Prakṛti.[2] Gopīnātha Kavirāja believes that the Tāntrika Mantraśāstra is rooted in Vedic religion.[3] According to G. C. Pande the earliest religion of man was more or less Tāntrika in nature. He has pointed out that a large number of Tāntrika elements may be traced in the pre-Buddhist religion of India.[4] L. M. Joshi follows him closely.[5] It has rightly been pointed out by modern scholars that the most important aspect of Tāntrikism is the dogma of *śaktisāhacharya*[6] which has always been closely related with the cult of the mother goddess on the one hand, and the phallic worship and Śaiva cult, on the other. But, as we have seen, both these elements were present in the Indus religion which consisted of the cult of the Mother Goddess, worship of liṅga and yonī, sexual dualism (the concept of the duality of the Male and Female principles of creation) and the practice of Yoga. All these elements were components of an undifferentiated religious and ritualistic complex, which subsequently came to be known as the Tāntrika tradition. In the Vedic religion also many elements of Tāntrikism already existed, many others were successfully absorbed and some others unsuccessfully tried to become legitimised by the sacred texts. Numerous rituals mainly sexual in character, designed to secure the fertility of fields, are recognised in the Vedas. For them ingenious explantions were offered later on. Practices like māraṇa, vaśīkaraṇa etc. are distinctly mentioned in the different parts of the Vedic literature. Many of the Atharvaṇika practices of witchcraft are almost identical with similar practices of the Tantras. The Vedic texts prescribe Somayajñas and Haviryajñas which included libations and drinks of intoxicating liquor. The *ŚB* states that wine is always pure and hence purifies the sacrificer. The rite of home was itself adopted by esoteric Buddhism with some modification.[7] The

[1]*Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 190.

[2]Williams, M., *Hinduism*, p. 88.

[3]*Bhāratīya Saṁskṛti aura Sādhanā*, I, Ch. XVII; cf. Alex Wayman, 'The Significance of Mantras from the Veda down to Buddhist Tāntric Practices', *Adyar Library Bulletin*, XXXIX, 1975, pp. 65–89.

[4]*Bauddha Dharma*, pp. 459–61.

[5]*Op. cit.*, p. 237 f.

[6]Shastri, H. P., *Modern Buddhism*, Intro., p. 10 f.; Kavirāja, G. N., *Bhāratīya Saṁskṛti aura Sādhanā*, I.

[7]Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987, p. 314–15.

ritul of purifyin the body by uttering some mantras as *bījas* while meditating the divinities on certain parts of the body and touching those parts as prescribed in the Vedic texts corresponds to the Tāntrika nyāsa. The use of apparently meaningless mystic sounds like *khaṭ*, *phaṭ*, *huṁ*, etc. are also found in Vedic texts.[1]

The Vedic literature shows that both phallic worship and the worship of mother goddess had acquired increasingly greater acceptance in the Vedic society itself. A large number of Tāntrika elements, such as mantras, sacrifice, priestly sorcery and magical charms, use of wine, worship of semi-divine and demoniac beings, etc. were known to the Vedic people. About a dozen hymns of the *RV* itself are concerned with magic. Magic is the main and essential subject-matter of the *AV*. In the *Tai. Upa.* (1.7) the entire universe (macrocosm) is equated with the human body (microcosm). In the *Br. Upa.* (I.1.1) the 'sacrificial horse' is compared with the universe. A similar symbolic account of the human body is given in the *Cha. Upa.* (VIII. 1.3) while the *Śvetāśvatara* (II.12) presupposes a 'Siddha-body.'[2] The *Pañchavidyās* described in the Upanishads also have obvious Tāntrika significance.[3] From these facts it is apparent that a large number of elements of Tāntrikism, both theoretical and practical, had early indigenous origin, though in its evolved form it was certainly a later development. Although later Tāntrika writers wanted to base their doctrines on the Vedas, the orthodox followers of the Vedic tradition invariably stressed their anti-Vedic character. The common obsession of many modern educated people, both foreign and Indian, is also that the Tantras should be evaluated apart from a general sheme of values to which Hinduism subscribes.

Further, in the popular mind Śāktism and Tantra have become so much identified that the word Tantra is almost reserved for the religious literature of the Śāktas while the term Āgama is confined to that of the Śaivas and Saṁhitā, Kāṇḍa or Rātra to that of the Vaishṇavas. Winternitz says : "When we speak of Tantra, we think primarily of the sacred books of the Śāktas." It has also been argued that the conventional division of the Brāhmaṇical religious literature was into Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra, arranged in chronological order and assigned to the four ages of the world. Against this view it has rightly been pointed out by scholars like John Woodroffe,

[1]Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 172.
[2]Pande, *Bauddha Dharma*, p. 461, n. 27.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 460.

Gopinātha Kavirāja, G.C. Pande and a host of others that :

(a) The Tantras regard themselves as Veda, Śruti or Āgama, 'revelation', as opposed to Smṛti or Nigama, 'tradition'. They are usually defined as '*Śrutiśākhāviśeshaḥ*', a particular branch of the Vedas. According to Bagchi one of the oldest Tantras available in manuscript form, *Niśvāsatattva Saṁhitā*, holds that the Tantra is the culmination of the esoteric science of the Vedānta and the Sāṁkhya.[1] The *Piṅgalāmata*, which is an equally old Tāntrika text, says that 'The Tantra, first communicated by Śiva, came down through tradition. It is Āgama with the characteristics of Chandas (Vedas).' The *Prapañchasāra* and other Tantras cite Vaidika mahāvākyas and mantras: and as mantras are a part of the Vedas, says the *Meru Tantra*, the Tantra is a part of the Vedas. The *Niruttara Tantra* calls Tantra the fifth Veda, and Kaulāchāra the fifth āśrama, which follows all others. The *Matsyasūkta-mahātantra* says that the disciple must be of pure soul and a knower of the Vedas. He who is devoid of Vaidika-kriyā is disqualified. The *Gandharva Tantra* says that the Tāntrika sādhaka must be a believer in the Vedas, ever attached to Brahman, living in Brahman and taking shelter with Brahman. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* describes the Tantra as Vedātmaka (Vedic in spirit) and says that there is no knowledge higher than that of the Vedas and no doctrine equal to the Kaula.[2]

According to the *Rudrayāmala* the supreme goddess is of the Atharvavedic group. The *Kulārṇava* also emphasises the Vedic origin of Tantra. Bhaskarārya considers the Tantras to be the supplements of the Upanishads. Natanānandanātha, in his commentary on the *Kāmakalāvilāsa*, has attemped to trace the origin of the Tāntrika mantras to the Vedas. Lakshmīdhara has quoted extracts from the *TS* and explained them as having reference to Śrīvidyā. The use of the Vedic mantras in the Tāntrika practices suggests the same thing. We also come across Tāntrika adaptations of the Vedic Gāyatrī-mantras for invocation of different deities.[3]

(b) The division of Brāhmaṇical literature into Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra does not mean that these different types have nothing in common between them. While some Tantras are modelled after Purāṇas some portions of the Purāṇa literature read almost like a Tantra manual. It means that the Tāntrika forms

[1]Bagchi, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

[2]All quoted by Bagchi, *op. cit.*

[3]Bhattacharya, N. N., *op. cit.*, p. 164 f.

existed during, if not before, the Purāṇas. Therefore the theory that the Tāntrika age followed the Paurāṇika age is not wholly correct.

(c) The attitude in the Tantras is basically similar to that of the Vedas. The religion of the Vedic Saṁhitās was ritualistic. In course of time it developed into a highly mystical ritual, a sort of magical operation, independent of the gods, efficacious by its own force, and capable of producing good as well as bad effects. Correct recitation of the mantras was its most important aspect. The Tāntrika sādhanā also seeks attainment of ascendancy over the forces of nature by esoteric ritual of the Vedic type, as well as by esoteric Yaugika practices, its aim being the union of Śiva and Śakti. The beginning of this type of esoteric ritual is found as early as the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upanishads*. Kullûkabhaṭṭa in his commentary on *Manu* II.1 divided traditional knowledge into Vedic and Tāntrika, and this division was not baseless. But in course of time this double framework ceased to be double and was assimilated into one organic whole.[1]

(d) The 'left-handed' practices (*vāmāchāra*), do not exhaust the whole content of Tāntrikism. The *Kulārṇava Tantra*, for instance describes as many as seven paths or āchāras, starting with Vedāchāra and ending with Kaula. Some other Tantras add two more namely aghora and yoga. Actually the word 'tantra' is as wide as it is varied, and embraces not only the Śākta, but the Śaiva, Vaishṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya and Buddhist forms (with their numerous subspecies) also. That being so, it will not do to look upon the Tantra simply as a gift of China, Tibet or some other foreign source.[2]

Did the Buddha Teach Tāntrikism Himself? : the Tradition of Third Dharmachakra Pravartana

Here it may be noted that the Tantras themselves, whether Hindu or Buddhist, usually make no claim to historicity.[3] They claim to be revelations and the Hindu Tantras are often equated with the Vedas. As regards the Buddhist Tantras, they are traced to the Buddha himself. According to the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*, a comment on the Sekoddeśa section of the *Kālachakratantra*, Mantrayāna was first taught by

[1]Pratyagatmananda, Swami, 'Tantra as a Way of Realization', *CHI*, IV, p. 227

[2]We have discussed the theory of the foreign origin of Tāntrikism also in *RHAI*, I, p. 337 f.

[3]Bhattacharya, H. D., in *AIK*, p. 31.

Buddha Dīpaṅkara and was adapted for our age by Śākyamuni Buddha. At the request of Suchandra, king of Śambhala, Gautama Buddha convened a Council at Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka, turned the Wheel of Law for the third time and delivered a discourse on esoteric path or Mantranaya (Mantrayāna), just as he had earlier delivered discourses on the Hīnayāna and the Prajñāpāramitānaya (Mahāyāna), respectively at Ṛshipattan and at Gṛdhrakūṭa. However, the Tibetan authorities give different dates for this event—according to some of them it took place in the first year of the sambodhi, according to others in the sixteenth year after sambodhi and according to a third tradition only shortly before the parinirvāṇa.

But as pointed out by Joshi the tradition of a third Dharmachakra-pravartana, like that of a second, is apparently a later fabrication. There is no reliable proof to show that the Buddha ever went to the Āndhra region. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, possibly the earliest *Vaipulyasūtra*, which contains many elements of the Mantrayāna, does not know the third turning of the Wheel of Law, although it is aware of Śrīparvata and Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka as the centres for the practice of *mantra-siddhi*. The *Guhyasamājatantra*, perhaps the earliest known Buddhist Tantra, which gives all essential elements of Tāntrikism, also does not refer to it. Rather it seems to contradict the Tāntrika Buddhist tradition when it states that Dīpaṅkara Buddha did not teach the tenets of the *Guhyasamāja* and gives a graphic description of the astonishment and shock to the bodhisattvas when they heard the radical Tāntrika teachings.[1]

However, despite these facts, the Tāntrika Buddhists attribute a number of sādhanās and mantras to Gautama Buddha and make him a Tāntrika of the first order going to the extent that he had discovered himself the great truth that the Buddhahood abides in the female organ and had delivered the secret discourse while enjoying the blissful state with the Vajrayoginī.[2] Some modern scholars such as B. Bhattacharya also believe that "the Tantras and Mantras, Mudrās and Dhāraṇīs were taught by the Buddha to the lay-brethren."[3] But the Tāntrika sādhanās cannot be regarded as Buddha's creations or revelations. As pointed out by Winternitz[4]

[1] Cf. Joshi , *op. cit.*, p. 240
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[3] *Buddhist Esoterism*, p. 19.
[4] Winternitz, *op. cit.*

there is no proof to believe in the existence of Tantras, maṇḍalas and dhāraṇīs in the age of Buddha. The Buddha discouraged superstition and blind faith and encouraged the spirit of critical enquiry. The *Kevaṭṭasutta* shows that he was not in favour of magical and superhuman feats, and regarded these as black arts In the *Brahmajālasutta* a long list of pseudo-sciences is given which the Buddha apparently condemned as low arts.

But the supposition that the Buddha was generally disinclined towards magic and mantras does not mean that he did not believe in their efficacy or that the early Buddhism was completely free of those elements which later on acquired the form of Tāntrikism. If those elements existed in the Indian society in the Vedic, nay even in the pre-Vedic period and were present in the Brāhmaṇical and even Jaina[1] societies in the age of early Buddhism, how can it be maintained that the Buddha and his followers remained immune from them, specially in view of the fact that in later ages Tāntrikism transformed Buddhism beyond recognition? It is true that in the *Brahmajālasutta*, the *Kevaṭṭasutta*, etc. the Buddha condemns certain magical arts as *tirachchhāna vijjā* or *michchhā-ājīva*, but their very condemnation proves their existence. Further, the Buddhists claimed that the aspirant for arhathood attains some supernatural powers (*ṛddhis*). The Buddha himself recognised *ṛddhis*, and practised *āsphānakayoga*. He took recourse to the display of superhuman feats to influence the laity. He is said to have converted the Jaṭilas by living in a room with a dragon whom he converted into an insect, showed the miracle of sending the same pot of fire to several mendicants who were suffering from cold while taking bath in a river, walked on a river, and converted Nanda by showing him heavenly nymphs. In the *Pāṭikasutta* he boasts of his miraculous powers. His disciple Moggallāna was alo famous for such powers.[2] In the *Dīgha Nikāya* there is a complete sutta (*Āṭānāṭiya*) which is described as *parittā* or *rakkhā* (protecting spell) to be memorised for averting evils. Most of these *parittās* were incorporated in the *Mahāmāyūrī*, an Esoteric text. A form of Esoteric Buddhism in incipient stage is also found in the *Mahāsamaya suttanta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.[3] According to the

[1] B Bhattacharya in *CHI*, IV, p. 260, Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, p. 307 f

[2] Cf. Sengupta, S, 'Magic and Miracle in Buddhism', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D C. Sircar, pp 22-38.

[3] Cf. Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987, p. 314.

Vinaya Piṭaka Bhāradvāja, a disciple of the Buddha, rose up into the air miraculously and brought down the begging bowl which was held high above by a seṭṭhī. In the *Chullavagga* V.6 a mantra is given as being prescribed by the Buddha to be used as a means of warding off the fear of snake bite. The Triśaraṇa formula was also recited to ward off dangers and bring prosperity.[1] In a slightly later period, the magical spells or dhāraṇīs formed a section of the Mahāsaṅghika texts. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, the Mahāmāyūrīdhāraṇī appears in extenso. Thus it is evident that the mind of the early Buddhists was not fully disabused of the belief in the efficacy of mantras and mantrāic rituals. The Buddha did not permit the use of mantras, mantrāic rituals, and of fish, meat, wine, association with the opposite sex, etc. on the part of the monks; yet it appears that there were many who violated his instructions in secret. It led to the emergence of secret (*guhya*) conclaves of Buddhist monks who secretly practised things that were forbidden by the Buddha. In course of time these secret conclaves developed into big organizations known as Guhyasamājas which composed their own text known as the *Guhyasamājatantra*.

Historical Emergence of Tāntrika Buddhism

The generally accepted view among modern scholars is that the Tāntrika Buddhism appeared in the seventh century A.D. However B. Bhattacharya, Tucci, Gopīnātha Kavirāja and G. C. Pande are inclined to push the date of the emergence of Buddhist esoterism back to the time of Maitreya and Asaṅga.[2] Rahula Sankrtyayana has also drawn attention to the great antiquity of the Mantrayāna.[3] In proof, these scholars recall that Tārānātha believed that the Tantras and Tāntrika ideas of a secret nature were as old as the time of the Mahāyāna teacher Nāgārjuna and that they were handed down from gurus to disciples secretly for nearly three hundred years. Further, there are strong Tibetan and Chinese traditions concerning the intimate connection of Asaṅga with Maitreyanātha and of both with esoteric Buddhism.[4] Further, there are a number of texts which are Tāntrika or semi-Tāntrika in nature and belong to pre-

[1]Sengupta, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
[2]See *JASB*, XXVI, p. 128 f.; Kavirāja, G. N., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 570 f.; Pande, *Bauddha Dharma*, p. 464–5.
[3]*Purātattva Nibandhāvalī*, p. 111 f.
[4]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 248; Pande, *Bauddha Dharma*, p. 465.

700 A.D. period. The earliest available texts on Tāntrika Buddhism are the *Guhyasamājatantra* (3rd cent. A.D. ?)[1] and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. The former deals with *yoga* (ordinary meditation) and *anuttarayoga* (Tāntrika forms of meditation), and the latter with *mudrās* (finger and bodily poses), *maṇḍalas* (mystic diagrams), *mantras* (mystical spells), *kriyās* (rites), *charyās* (duties of an officiating priest in worship), *śīla* (observance of moral precepts), *vratas* (vows), *śauchāchāra* (cleanliness in acts), *niyama* (religious observances), *homa* (offering of oblations), *japa* (muttering of prayers) and *dhyāna* (meditation). The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* also gives directions for painting of the different gods and goddesses of the Tāntrika pantheon.[2] Thus it reflects not only the developed popular Mahāyānism, but also shows the growth of Tāntrika ritual and worship. Though this work was revised in the post-Gupta period, its original form may be as early as the second century A.D. Among other early Tāntrika texts are also included the *Karaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, which possibly existed before the 4th century A.D., the *Nīlakaṇṭhadhāraṇī*, discovered from Central Asia, and the *Mahāpratyaṅgirādhāraṇī*, which invokes Tārā and probably belongs to the 6th century A.D.

From the above discussion it is apparent that the Tāntrika Buddhism had made its appearance several hundred years before 7th century A.D. Actually the beginning of Tāntrika Buddhism appears to be connected with the beginnings of the Mahāyāna. Indeed the Tibetans never made any difference between Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna[3] and Nāgārjuna himself described the Mahāyāna as *guhya* (esoteric).

Early Centres of Tāntrika Buddhism

According to B. Bhattacharya, S. K. De, Winternitz, etc. the original home of Tāntrika Buddhism was Eastern India, specially Bengal (Vaṅga and Samataṭa region), Assam and Orissa.[4] Nālandā, Vikramaśilā, Odantapuri were its great centres in the Pāla period. But Rahula Sankrtyayana believes that Mantrayāna and Vajrayāna

[1] Cf. Wayman, Alex, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p. 13 ff, who places it in 4th century.

[2] Dutt, N., in *AIK*, pp. 265–66.

[3] Cf. Dasgupta, N. N., in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 406.

[4] Winternitz, *HIL*, II, p. 400; B. Bhattacharya, *B. C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 354–61; S. K. De, *Indian Studies—Past and Present*, I, No. 4, p. 604; N. K. Sahu (*Buddhism in Orissa*, p. 68 f.) believes that Orissa was the cradle of both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna.

originated around Śrīparvata, and Dhānyakaṭaka in Āndhra.[1] In the Tantras there is a tradition that Kāmākhyā, Śrīhaṭṭa, Uḍḍiyāna and Pūrṇagiri were the centres (Śāktapīṭhas) of esotericism where Śakti worship was first revealed.[2] B. Bhattacharya places all these Pīṭhas in eastern India, locating Uḍḍiyāna of this list in Vaṅga-Samataṭa region.[3] According to L. M. Joshi, however, Buddhist Tāntrikism originated at two places—in the far south and the north-west.[4] The early association of esotericism with Āndhra is indicated by the following facts: (1) According to *Ashṭasāhasrikā* the oldest Prajñāpāramitā text, the Prajñāpāramitānaya, which gave birth to Mantrayāna, originated in Dakshiṇāpatha. (2) The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* records that Mantrayāna was promulgated in Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka. (3) The various Buddhist traditions associate Nāgārjuna, who rescued the esoteric science, with Śrīparvata. (4) The Mahāsaṅghikas who, according to Yuan Chwang, had a whole *Piṭaka* of dhāraṇīs, flourished in Āndhra. (5) The *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* was discovered, and was probably composed also, in South India. (6) Yuan Chwang records that Bhāvaviveka went to Dhānyakaṭaka where he recited the Vajrapāṇidhāraṇī for a long time. (7) The *Harshacharita* and the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇa, the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti and the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa record that Śrīparvata was a great centre of Tantra and Mantra.

Another great early centre of Tāntrikism was Uḍḍiyāna or Udyāna, mentioned as one of the four Tāntrika Pīṭhas. Many scholars identify Uḍḍiyāna with Orissa (Oḍivisha) or locate it in Vaṅga-Samataṭa region,[5] but Waddell, Lévi, Tucci, Bagchi and Joshi have shown that it was the same as Udyāna of Yuan Chwang and was identical with the modern Swat Valley in Pakistan.[6] Yuan Chwang says that the people of Udyāna held magical arts and spells in high esteem. The Pali canon mentions Gāndhārīvijjā as an art of sorcery and exorcism. Yuan Chwang relates the legends concerning four sacred places in Uḍḍiyāna where the Buddha in his former existences dismembered his limbs (cf. the legend concerning the

[1]*Purātattva Nibandhāvalī*, p. 106 f.

[2]Sircar, D. C., 'Śākta Pīṭhas', *JASB* (*L*), XIV, p. 8 ff.

[3]*B. C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 359–60.

[4]Joshi, *Studies*, pp. 255–60; 'Original Homes of Tāntrika Buddhism', *PIHC*, 1965; *JOI*, XVI, No. 3, March 1967, pp. 223–32.

[5]Bhattacharya, B., *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 359 f.

[6]Waddell, *Lamaism*, p. 15; Tucci, *East and West*, IX, p. 279 ff.; Lévi, in *JA*, 1915, p. 105; Bagchi, *IHQ*, VI, p. 576 ff.; Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 258 ff.

dismemberment of the body of Satī, Śiva's wife). The archaeological explorations and excavations have also yielded Tāntrika antiquities in the North-West. Lastly, Asaṅga (who had much to do with esoterism), Padmasambhava (the apostle of Tibetan Buddhism), Indrabhūti (a Tāntrika author) and Chankuṇa (the exorcist Prime Minister of Lalitāditya of Kashmir), all belonged to the Tukhāra country.

Was Tāntrikism Originally Brāhmaṇical or Buddhist ?

Before we proceed further, the question whether or not Tāntrikism was introduced in Buddhism as a result of the Brāhmaṇical influence may briefly be discussed. According to Austin Waddell Buddhist Tāntrikism is nothing but Śaiva idolatory, Śakti worship and demonology. On the other hand, B. Bhattacharya, in his *Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, has concluded that the Buddhists were the first to introduce the Tantras into their religion, and that the Hindus borrowed them from the Buddhists in later times. According to Anāgārika Govinda also, the influence of Tāntrika Buddhism upon Hinduism was so profound that up to the present day the majority of Western scholars have laboured under the impression that Tāntrikism is a Hinduistic creation which was taken over later by more or less decadent Buddhist schools. "To declare Buddhist Tāntrism as an offshoot of Śaivism," he asserts, "is only possible for those who have no first-hand knowledge of Tāntric literature. A comparison of the Hindu Tantras with those of Buddhism (which are mostly preserved in Tibetan and which therefore for long remained unnoticed by Indologists) not only shows an astonishing divergence of methods and aims, in spite of external similarities, but proves the spiritual and historical priority and originality of the Buddhist Tantras."[1] But we do not agree with both these views. We feel that the question of the priority of Buddhist Tāntrikism over Brāhmaṇical Tāntrikism should not be raised at all because both of them developed concomitantly out of the seeds which are traced to the religious ideas of the pre-Buddhist period (*supra*).

Main Features of Tāntrika Buddhism

The first main characteristic feature of Tāntrika Buddhism is the *use of mantras*. Actually mantras are so fundamental for Tāntrika Buddhism that in its primary stage it is often called Mantrayāna.

[1]Anāgārika Govinda, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 360 f.

The term *mantra* means a 'hymn' or 'prayer' sacred to a deity; it is also understood to mean a 'spell', a 'charm' or an 'incantation'. A mantra is a symbol. Thus 'Praṁ' symbolises the Prajñāpāramitā. A mantra often symbolically represents a deity or even Reality. Thus 'Oṁ' denotes the Lord through its sound. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is full of mantras and their merits. The *Guhyasamāja* and the *Hevajra-tantra* each devote a whole chapter to Mantracharyā. The mantras appear to have developed from dhāraṇīs. The Mahāsaṅghikas are known to have developed a Dhāraṇī Pīṭaka. The dhāraṇīs are found quoted in several early Mahāyāna texts. A number of manuscripts discovered in Gilgit and assignable on palaeographical grounds to the 5th and the 6th centuries A.D., contain dhāraṇīs[1] and mantras. The contents of the texts are obviously older than their script. The *Karaṇḍavyūha* attributes a dhāraṇī to the Buddha. The *Laṅkāvatāra* contains many magical formulae and the *Boddhisattvabhūmi* dwells at length on the meaning and mystic aspect of the syllables.[2]

Besides the mantras, *a vast and varied pantheon* is another characterstic feature of Tāntrika Buddhism. Although the Mahāyānists had been worshipping Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, some demi-gods and a number of deified sages since long yet the further evolution of a well-classified Buddhist pantheon may well be attributed to the Tāntrika phase of Buddhism. In the Tāntrika Buddhist texts is usually given an elaborate discussion on complex liturgy, iconography and theology of the Dhyānī Buddhas (Akshobhaya, Vairochana, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi). Each of them is associated with one Śakti or female counterpart with a human Buddha, a Bodhisattva, a family, a seed-syllable, an element, a colour, a skandha, a vehicle, a particular direction and location in the human body.[3]

The *Śakti-worship* is the *raison d'etre* of Tāntrikism. According to some scholars[4] the main difference between Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist Tāntrikism is that the latter is not Śāktism. The concept of divine power, of the creative female aspect of Śiva, does not play any role in Buddhism. To the Buddhists Śakti is māyā, the very

[1] Cf. Sircar, D. C., 'Buddhist Dhāraṇīs from China in Inscriptions and Manuscripts', *JAIH*, III, pp. 36–9.

[2] See Dutt, N., 'Tāntric Buddhism', *Bulletin of Tibetology*, I, No. 2, pp. 5–17; Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 244; cf. *AIK*, p. 260.

[3] *AIK*, p. 261 f.

[4] Anāgārika Govinda, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 363.

power that creates illusion from which only prajñā can liberate us. But we fail to agree with this observation. The Buddhists emphasize Śakti-sāhacharya as much as the Hindu Tāntrikists do, and even believe that the Śākyamuni had himself discovered that the Buddha, hood abides in female organ and had delivered the secret doctrine while in the blissful state with the Vajrayoginī. To quote L. M. Joshi: "one of the important aspects of Buddhist Tāntrika culture is its emphasis on the female counterpart; we may call it 'Śakti-Worship' or worship of female energy, or association with coefficient female partner in spiritual effort. The consensus of opinion among acknowledged scholars is that Śakti-sādhanā is the essence of Tantra, whether Hinduistic or Buddhistic."[1]

In Tāntrikism *sādhanā* means calling forth a god or goddess usually by means of repetitive recitation of the appropriate mantra and by meditating over his or her form or symbol. A large number of sādhanās now available in mixed Sanskrit contain eulogies of various deities, their prayers, different forms, iconographic details, attributes, mantras and modes of worship, etc.[2]

An important concept of Tāntrikism is that of *maṇḍala*. Literally maṇḍala means circle. But in Tāntrikism it technically signifies one of the subtlest concepts of Indian mysticism. Here maṇḍala denotes 'an idealised representation of existence', a 'mystic circle', a 'magical diagram', or 'a sphere of divinity'. "A *maṇḍala*", says Tucci, "delineates a consecrated superficies and protects it from invasion by disintegrating forces symbolised in demoniacal cycles."[3]

Almost every Tāntrika text describes the *importance of guru* or teacher. It is impossible to tread the path of sādhanā without the guidance and kindness of the guru. Guru has to be respected and obeyed as the very incarnation of Truth; he is to be reverenced as the Lord.

In Tāntrika Buddhism the supreme Reality is often described as the *Unity of Prajñā (Wisdom) and Upāya (Means)*; it is the 'Non-Dual', 'Two-in-One', the state of final realisation. "*Prajñā* is the same as *śūnyatā* (voidness) and *upāya* is the same as *karuṇā* (compassion); these two terms are very well-known to Mahāyāna sūtras. Bodhisattva is the embodiment of both wisdom and compassion; by means of Prajñāpāramitā or Transcendental Gnosis, he realises

[1]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 279 f.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 286; Dasgupta in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 407.
[3]Quoted by Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

the voidness of the phenomenal things and knows that this saṁsāra is ephemeral and miserable. Out of *karuṇā* or compassion he endeavours for the salvation of suffering beings."[1]

In Tāntrika Buddhism *nirvāṇa is envisaged as mahāsukha.* That is to say, the Ultimate Reality is of the nature of Great Bliss—supreme bliss among all forms of bliss. Mahāsukha is the essential nature of the final Truth. It is the state of unity of śūnyatā and karuṇā or prañā and upāya; mahāsukha is Prajñopāya, the non-dual fusion of wisdom and means.[2] Mahāsukha is the wisdom of all the Tathāgatas, and by nature is self-knowable (*sva-saṁvedya*). It is described negatively also. Thus Saraha says that Mahāsukha is essencelessness (*niḥsvabhāva*), indescribable (*akatha*) and devoid of self and not-self.

The *language* of the Buddhist Tāntrika texts is a mixed variety of Sanskrit but its import is 'special', 'cryptic' and 'mystic'. It is called *Sandhābhāsā* by which is meant a linguistic device of that circle of initiates which employs among its members some intentional symbols and signs called 'Choma'. It refers to the real meaning of a text as opposed to its superficial meaning.

Schools of Tāntrikism

Mantrayāna

Tāntrika Buddhism assumed several forms and produced several schools. As noted above its earliest stage is usually called Mantrayāna. Strictly speaking the Mantrayāna concerns itself with *mantras* (words of a certain combination, pronounced in a certain manner) and *yantras* (magic circles) and includes such things as *dhāraṇīs* (memorized prayers), *mālā mantras* (garland of charms), *hṛdaya mantras* (short charms), etc. It believes that mystic forces are generated by the recitation of mantras and that, with the help of these mystic forces, the worshipper can obtain whatever he desires, such as wealth, victory, siddhis, and even mukti. The yantras or magic circles are related with mantras because a yantra cannot bestow any power unless the aksharas of appropriate mantras are placed at their appropriate places in it. The *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, the *Guhyasamājatantra* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* are full of

[1]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[2]Dasgupta, in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 410.

mantras and dhāraṇīs and as these were composed in the second or third century A.D. or thereabouts, as a school Mantrayāna is regarded as old as the time of Nāgārjuna.

Vajrayāna

In the *Guhyasamāja*, there is an account of the phenomenal world, which is said to have emanated from the original Tathāgata or the Reality. The five skandhas of the early Buddhists, as also the impurities, like *rāga*, *dvesha* and *moha*, are personified as so many buddhas, issuing out of the original Tathāgata, called '*bodhichitta-vajrastathāgata*'.[1] Hence, the source of all the buddhas is the *Vajra*, which is identical with Śūnyatā or the Reality. But in the Vajrayāna Śūnyatā is something positive (which Indrabhūti takes as Mahāsukha, while Anangavajra defines it as Prajñopāya).[2] Being characteristicless, Vajra is incapable of leading us to the Truth; therefore from time to time it converts itself into *kāya-vāk-chitta-vajra* and teaches the way that is Vajrayāna (the Admantine or Diamond path). Thus the Vajrayānists accept the Yogāchāra view about the three kāyās (bodies) of the Buddha and like the Mādhyamikas, identify Śūnyatā or Vajra with saṃsāra (phenomental world). The Vajrayāna sādhakās were taught that excreta, urine, etc. are not different from any good food; nor any woman, whether mother or a sister or other's wife or a girl of low caste, from any other enjoyable woman.

Though hideous in many respects, the Vajrayāna made many contributions to Buddhism. Some Hindus were also impressed by its doctrines, deities, mantras, sādhanās, etc. It introduced elements of yoga into ordinary worship, gave a regular system of mantras, and produced an exquisite art.

Cult of Siddhāchāryas

The idea of *siddhi* (psychic and supernatural power) is common to all Indian religious systems. The Brāhmanical texts speak of eight siddhis. The Buddhist texts speak of ten kinds of powers (*iddhi*, *ṛddhi* or *abhijñā*) such as to project mind-made image of oneself, to become invisible, to pass through solid things such as wall, to penetrate solid ground as if it were water, to walk on water, to fly through the air, to touch sun and moon, to ascend into the highest

[1]Majumdar, A. K., *Concise History of Ancient India*, III, 1983, p. 411.
[2]Dutt in *HK*, p. 265; cf. Dasgupta, S. B., *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, pp. 95–112

heavens, etc.[1]

The Buddhist Tāntrikists, who flourished between the eighth and twelfth centuries, developed the theory of eighty-four Siddhas, who had attained supernatural powers through the practice of yoga. The *Varṇaratnākara* of Jyotirīśvara (14th century) mentions them while the Tibetan sources give a systematic biographical sketch of each of them. Their names are (1) Luhī or Lūhi-pā, (2) Līlā-pā, (3) Virū-pā, (4) Ḍoṁbī-pā, (5) Śabara (Śabarī)-pā, (6) Saraha-pā (Rāhula-bhadra), (7) Kaṅkāli-pā, (8) Mīna-pā, (9) Goraksha-pā, (10) Chau-raṅgī-pā, (11) Vīṇā-pā, (12) Śāntī-pā, (13) Tanti-pā, (14) Charmāri (Charmarī)-pā, (15) Khaḍga-pā, (16) Nāgārjuna, (17) Kāṇho-pā, (18) Karṇarī-pā (Āryadeva), (19) Ṭhagaṇa-pā, (20) Nāro-pā (Nāḍapāda), (21) Śāli-pā (Śṛgāla-pāda), (22) Tilo-pā (Tailika-pāda), (23) Chhatra-pā, (24) Bhadra-pā, (25) Dvikhaṇḍī-pā, (26) Ajogī-pā, (27) Kāḍa-pāda (Kāla-pā), (28) Dhovī-pā, (29) Kaṅkaṇa-pā, (30) Kambala-pā, (31) Gengi-pā (Teṅki-pā), (32) Chhade-pā, (33) Taṇdhi-pā, (34) Kukkurī-pā, (35) Chujbi (Kusūlī)-pā, (36) Dhar-ma-pā, (37) Mahī-pā, (38) Achinti-pā, (39) Babhahi or Bhalaha-pā, (40) Nalina-pā, (41) Bhūsūkū-pā, (42) Indrabhūti, (43) Megha-pāda (Meko-pā), (44) Kuṭhārī-pā or Kuṭhālī-pā, (45) Karmāra-pā, (46) Jālandhara-pā, (47) Rāhula-pā, (48) Garbharī-pā, (49) Dha-kari-pā, (50) Medinī-pā, (51) Paṅkaja-pā, (52) Ghaṇṭā-pā, (53) Yogī-pā, (54) Chelukā-pā, (55) Vāguri (Guṇḍarī)-pā, (56) Luñchaka-pā, (57) Nirguṇa-pā, (58) Jayānanda, (59) Charpaṭi-pā, (60) Champaka-pā, (61) Vishaṇa (Bhīkhana)-pā, (62) Bhali (Teli, Taili)-pā, (63) Ku-mārī-pā, (64) Charslaṭi or Chavarī or Javāri-pā, (65) Maṇibhadrā (Yoginī), (66) Mekhalā-pā (Yoginī), (67) Maṅkhalā-pā (Yoginī), (68) Kalakala-pā, (69) Kanthaḍi-pā, (70) Dauḍī or Dhahuli-pā, (71) Udhali-pā, (72) Kapāla-pā, (73) Kīla-pā, (74) Pushkara or Sāgara-pā, (75) Sarvabhaksha-pā, (76) Nāgabodhi-pā, (77) Dārika-pā, (78) Puttalī or Putuli-pā, (79) Pānaha or Upānaha-pā, (80) Ko-kālī-pā, (81) Anaṅga-pā, (82) Lakshmīṅkarā (yoginī), (83) Samudra-pā, and (84) Bhali or Vyāli-pā.

According to some scholars the list of eighty-four Siddhas has no historical value. They argue that on account of the mystic implication of the number eighty-four so many names, whether fictitious or historical, have been put together to make up a list. But it is also a fact that many teachers mentioned in this list were actual perso-

[1]Bagchi in *CHI*, IV, p. 273; cf. Upadhyaya, N. N., *Gorakshanātha*, (in Hindi), Ch. II.

nages, known in the Buddhist world of those days for their learning and spiritual attainments. Many texts or songs composed by them have been preserved partially in original but mostly in Tibetan translations (in the Tanjur, Volumes XLVII and XLVIII).

As regards the dates of the various Siddhas, the first of them namely Luhī-pā was, in all likelihood, the same as Matsyendranātha of other traditions,[1] who flourished about the beginning of the 10th century A.D. Siddha Nāgārjuna lived in the tenth century, and Charpati also belonged to about the same time. Tilo-pā was a contemporary of King Mahipāla I of Bengal (c. 988–1038) and Naro-pā was his disciple. Jālandhara-pā and Kāṇho-pā lived also about the middle of the eleventh century. Thus the most famous Siddhāchāryas belonged to the tenth and eleventh centuries though some of them probably flourished in the twelfth.[2] The great majority of them may apparently be assigned to the eleventh century.

The general trend of the teachings of the Siddhāchāryas was Tāntrika. Nobody, except a qualified guru was allowed to initiate the disciple in the mysteries of their *sādhanā*. The guru had to find out the special spiritual aptitude of the disciple and suggest to him the mode of sādhanā most suitable for him. *Kula* symbolized the special spiritual leaning of a disciple. There were five such *kulas*, technically called *ḍombī*, *naṭī*, *rajakī*, *chāṇḍālī*, and *brāhmaṇī*. The nature of these *kulas* was determined by the five skandhas or the essences of the five basic elements (*mahābhūtas*). The five kulas are thus the five aspects of prajñā. The śakti assumes five different forms according to the predominance of each of the five skandhas or constituents. The best way for the initiate is to follow up his special *kula* or śakti during his sādhanā.

The Siddha sādhanā involved the practice of a new form of yoga developed by the Siddhāchāryas. According to it, there are thirty-two nerve-channels (*nāḍīs*) within the body. The psychic energy, which has its seat below the *nābhi* (navel), flows up into the top-most station within the head called *mahāsukhasthāna* (the place of great bliss) through these channels. Various names are given to the nāḍīs such as *lalanā*, *rasanā*, *avadhūti*, *pravaṇā*, *kṛshṇarūpiṇī*, *sāmānya*, *pāvakī*, *sumanā*, *kāminī*, etc.[3] There are also a number of other stations, called either lotuses or wheels, within the body. They

[1]See Bagchi, in *History of Bengal*, I, ed. by Majumdar, p. 423.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 419.
[3]*CHI*, IV, p. 277.

are compared with the places of pilgrimage like Uḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri and Kāmarūpa. In its upward march the psychic energy has to pass through them.

The ultimate goal of sādhanā is the attainment of the state of *sahaja* which is one of great blissfulness, without beginning and without end, free from duality. In this state the sādhaka finds himself to be the sole reality, identical with the universe, identical with the Buddha—a being who is ever free. Everything else dwindles into non-entity.[1]

The attainment of the highest goal also meant certain physical perfections. Therefore a good deal of emphasis was placed on the *kāya-sādhanā* involving trans-substantiation of the body. Later followers of the Siddhāchāryas carried it to the extreme and concerned themselves only with the means of attaining a perfect, changeless and imperishable body which would help them to live long. It could be attained in various ways, the most important of them being an upward movement of the *bodhichitta* (semen virile).

The cultivation of the *bodhichitta* was related with certain alchemical practices. Siddha Nāgārjuna was famous for introducing alchemy in matters of sādhanā. The Siddhāchāryas introduced many other innovations in spiritual exercises, but at present it is difficult to follow them on account of the symbolic character of the language in which they are described.

Nāthism

Nāthism derived its inspiration from Vajrayāna and the 84 Siddhas. The propounders of the Nātha school Hinduized the teachings of the Buddhist Tantras. Actually Tāntrikism proved to be a great synthesizing force and the synthesis of Śaivism and Buddhism is best reflected in the Nātha sect.[2] The Nāthas were originally nine in number. Sometimes they are included in the list of the eighty-four Siddhas of the Buddhists, though it will be a mistake to believe that the Nātha school was substantially the same as the Tāntrika Buddhism. The Nāthas introduced many new theories in the sphere of *haṭhayoga* and *yoga* which were different from those propounded in the Tantras.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

[2] Vide, Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, pp. 293–301; Dwivedi, H. P., *Nātha Sampradāya*, (in Hindi), p. 1 ff.

During the middle of the seventh century Nāthism became popular through the teachings and mystic songs of the eighty-four Siddhas. It travelled to Nepal and Tibet and Tāntrika works were translated into Tibetan. Some of its works also travelled to China and are now found in their Chinese translations.

Sahajayāna

The Vajrayāna also gave rise to several later Yānas such as the Sahajayāna and Kālachakrayāna. The Sahajayāna is believed to have started with the great Siddha Saraha. By Sahajayāna he meant easy path. According to him perfection can be attained while eating, drinking and merry-making. It implied rejection of religious formalities for obtaining nirvāṇa.[1] Lakshmīṅkarādevī (A.D. 729), the sister of King Indrabhūti of Uḍḍiyāna, was another great Sahajayānist. She declared in her *Advayasiddhi* that no suffering, fasting, rites, bathing purification, or obedience to the rules of society are necessary for the purpose of obtaining emancipation. It is useless to bow down before the images of gods which are made of wood, stone, or mud. The worshipper should offer worship only to his own body where all gods reside. The movement exerted great influence on Vaishṇavism also.[2]

Kālachakrayāna

The Kālachakrayāna seems to be a later development of the Vajrayāna. According to the *Kālachakratantra* and its commentary *Vimalaprabhā* written by Puṇḍarīka, Kāla or Time is a phenomenal expression of Karuṇā and Chakra is the world of objects. Kālachakra is a fierce deity, an embodiment of Śūnyatā[3] and Karuṇā (compassion), embraced by the Śakti or goddess Prajñā. Thus Kālachakrayāna represents the philosophical conception of *advaya* or non-duality, a union of *Prajñā* and *Upāya*.[4] Kālachakra is regarded as the Ādibuddha or the progenitor even of the Buddhas, that

[1]*The Struggle for Empire*, p. 413; Upadhyaya, N. N., *Tāntrika Bauddha Sādhanā aura Sāhitya*, p. 163 ff.

[2]For Sahajiyās of Bengal, see P. C. Bagchi in *History of Bengal*, I, ed. by R. C. Majumdar, p. 424.

[3]*Cf.* Banerjee, R., 'Śūnyatā as Viewed by the Kālacakra School of Buddhism', *POC*, II, Gauhati Session, 1966, pp. 147–49; Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 155 ff.

[4]Yadava, B. N. S., *Society and Culture in Northern India*, p. 344 f.

is to say, the Dhyānī Buddhas. The doctrine that in "one's own body, the whole world is manifest" has a resemblance with the doctrines of the Sahajayāna and Nāthism. The system became popular in the eastern and Himalayan regions.

Here reference may also be made to the Dharma cult, the followers of which mainly came from the lower strata of society—the Ḍomas, Chāṇḍālas, etc. It derived its main elements from Buddhism—Vajrayāna and Mantrayāna.[1]

Assessment of Buddhist Tāntrikism

Criticism of Buddhist Tāntrikism

Buddhist Tāntrikism has been severely criticised by a number of modern scholars. According to N. Dutt, in Tāntrikism "The religion lost itself in the maze of mysticism and was engulfed by a host of *mudrās* (finger-gestures and ceremonies), *maṇḍalas* (mystical diagrams), *kriyās* (rites and ceremonies) and *charyās* (meditational practices and observances for external and internal purity). The teachings of one of the noblest minds were thus deformed into a system of magical spells, exorcisms, spirit-beliefs, and worship of demons and divinities." Further, "in the name of religion and philosophy, necessity and circumstances have debased human mind to the lowest conceivable vulgarity."[2] Many other scholars including Kern, R. L. Mitra, Winternitz, Charles Eliot and Poussin have denounced the Tāntrika practice of Śakti-sāhacharya, ceremony of secret initiation of young yogins and yoginīs, and the use of the diverse kinds of food and drinks including flesh and wine, that find frequent mention in the pages of esoteric texts. B. Bhattacharya stigmatises the Tantras as examples of 'the worst immorality and sin' and Tāntrikism as a 'disease'.

However many critics of Tāntrikism have conceded that the Tāntrika sādhanā "did confer on the adepts some superhuman powers and also led many to the realization of high spiritual states" and that Tāntrikism also "envisaged something very deep and subtle to be realized by those who were initiated into the secrets by their spiritual teachers." It has also been pointed out that the Tantras themselves make it quite clear that their language is not to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 377.
[2] Dutt, in *AIK*, p. 258 f.

be interpreted literally and that the darker aspects of their practices were not meant for ordinary men. Then there are a number of scholars who have showered great praise on Tāntrikism. According to Tucci, apart from some exceptions, "the Tantras contain one of the highest expressions of Indian mysticism, which may appear to us rather strange in its outward form, chiefly because we do not always understand the symbolical language in which they are written." Snellgrove and Lāmā Anāgārika Govinda[1] have also tried to defend Tāntrikism from the attack launched against it by modern scholars. To us it appears that despite our ignorance about the mysteries of Tāntrikism it cannot be denied that whatever is known about it is sufficient to generate a sense of repulsion. The doctrines that the Buddhahood resides in the female organ, that lust is crushed by lust, that Nirvāṇa is found in the embrace of a young girl and that a mother or sister is no different from any other enjoyable girl and that the use of the five makāras is essential in religious practices can hardly be defended despite the sublime heights which the philosophy of Tantra obviously touched.

Tāntrika Religion as a Factor of Social Change

The Tantras appear to have specially spread among the outcastes, voluntary outcastes and carefree wanderers. The Tāntrika thinkers reflect a disregard for caste system. In the *Kulārṇavatantra*, caste is regarded as a *pāśa* which a sādhaka has to cut off. In many cases Tāntrika priestly functions were performed by people of low castes.[2] In the works of the Siddhas Nairātmya is imagined as a Ḍombī girl. In a song Kaṇho-pā sings that he is going to marry the Ḍombī. After marrying her, he will escape from further birth and will get the *anuttara* world as dowry. "He spends his time in sexual union with her in the company of Yoginīs. He lives in her company day and night. The Yogī, who enjoys the company of the Ḍombī is maddened by Sahaja bliss and does not leave her even for a moment." Likewise, Bhūsūkū-pā fancies the *avadhūti*, representing the process to the *mahāsukha* as a Chāṇḍāla woman, and claims to have married her. Ḍombī-pā conceives a *Mātaṅga* girl as plying the

[1]Govinda, Lāmā Anāgārika, 'Principles of Buddhist Tāntrism', *Bulletin of Tibetology*, II, No. 1, pp. 9–16.

[2]See, Yadava, B. N. S., *Society and Culture in Northern India*, p. 380; cf. Renou, L., *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 87; Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, pp. 265–73.

boat in the middle of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. She stands for *nairātmya*, which leads man through the middle course to the final bliss. Śabara-pā treats *nairātmya* and *śūnyatā* as a Śabarī girl residing in *mahāsukhasthāna*. According to Indrabhūti, women of low castes and degraded families like the Chāṇḍālas are eminently suitable for esoteric sādhanā. The *Guhyasamājatantra* especially recommends the daughters of washermen for this purpose.[1] The fact that a large number out of the 84 Siddhas reportedly belonged to lower castes (about half of them being of the rank of Ḍoṁba, Chamāra, Chāṇḍāla, washerman, oilman, tailor, fisherman, wood-cutter, cobbler, and so forth) also indicates that Tāntrikism was chiefly patronized by the members of the inferior classes. Some women also became Siddhas. Lakshmīṅkarā, sister of King Indrabhūti, lived at Sambhalanagara: Maṇibhadrā was a maid-servant of Magadha; Kalakala-pā belonged to Devīkoṭa (North Bengal) and Mekhalā-pā was the daughter of a householder of Agachenagar. Evidently the Siddhas cared little for conventions and social taboos and taught that all classes are one, there being no difference between a man and woman, a Brāhmaṇa and a Ḍoṁba, a king and a slave. Some of them, including Saraha or Rāhulabhadra, who was a Brāhmaṇa by caste, became outcastes voluntarily. Saraha is said to have married the daughter of an arrowmaker who belonged to a mean caste. In his very first *dohā*, he attacks his own former high caste. He also disregarded intellectualism and externals of religion. The use of the local vernaculars—Apabhraṁśa instead of Sanskrit—was another aspect of the same mentality.

Saraha had studied at Nālandā under Haribhadra, who was a pupil of the famous scholar and missionary Śāntarakshita. Haribhadra was a contemporary of King Dharmapāla (770–815 A.D.). Hence Saraha also flourisheh during his reign. After completing his studies, he took to Tāntrika practices and rose in revolt against the distinction of high-class and low-class people. He believed that the depressed and degraded classes had as much sanctity as the privileged and high-placed castes. He proclaimed the spiritual potentiality of the lower classes and their equality with other people.[2] The Brāhmaṇas, he observed, read the Vedas in vain and do not know the essence of things. Proclaiming the futility of the inhibitions of dining and drinking, Saraha enjoined on the people to take food at the house

[1]Buddha Prakash, *op. cit.*
[2]Cf. Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, p. 265 ff.

of the Chāṇḍāla. Thus, he initiated a powerful movement of the lower classes against social injustice. Soon this movement gained momentum. Other Yogins also, who included both the Sahajayānī Siddhas and Nāthas, knew no system of caste and went all-out against it. At the time of Muslim invasions, this movement was in full swing, and, after the Muslim conquest, it swept through the whole country. It shook the very style of thinking and living and convulsed the mind and heart of the people. The entire population of the country was seized by this mental and spiritual unrest. The psychology of the masses passed through a deep crisis and the system of values, concepts and standards of life was put in the melting-pot.

"Thus, it is clear that the Siddhas thought in terms of the lower, outcaste and untouchable people. All their imageries and conceptions centred on the lower classes and their discourses breathed their atmosphere."[1] Their doctrines were, in the words of Louis Renou, "esoteric as well as democratic, as they do not recognise distinctions of caste or sect. They are a kind of free-masonry."[2]

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 87

Part 4

BUDDHISM AND INDIAN CULTURE

Chapter 14

PLACE OF BUDDHISM IN INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Was Buddhism a New Religion and Culture ?

In recent years some Buddhist scholars have tried to propound the thesis that there was something like Buddhist culture which was 'distinct and different from Hindu culture.'[1] "A well-defined *weltanschauung*", L. M. Joshi, a Buddhist scholar, asserts, "originally peculiar to the Śramaṇic tradition, moral and ascetic ideas, religious practices and institutions, art and literature, education and learning, inspired by the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha, constitute what has been called the Buddhist culture."[2] According to him this Buddhist culture may be viewed as constituting "the dominant strand" of Indian culture.[3] It obviously implies that the Hindu culture is a comparatively less important element of the complex fabric of Indian culture. But the attempt to prove the existence of Buddhist culture in ancient India as something different from Hindu culture and make the former as comparatively more important than the latter can hardly be substantiated. It is obviously a projection into the past of the desire of modern Buddhist scholars to establish a separate cultural identity of their own. The attempt begins with the rejection[4] of the well-established view that the Buddha himself was merely a reformer of "the Hindu religion as practised in his time."[5] Against this L. M. Joshi has urged that "the use of the term 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' in the context of the age of Buddha is entirely wrong, both historically and doctrinally. There were neither Hindus nor Hinduism in the 7th and 6th centuries before Christ."[6] But such a view conveniently denies or overlooks that by the same token

[1]Joshi, *Studies*, p. 329.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 328.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 329.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 327.
[5]Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1004.
[6]Joshi, *Studies*, p. 327.

Buddhism did not exist as a separate religion in the age of the Buddha. The Buddha did not renounce Brāhmaṇical religion, referred to the Brāhmaṇical sages and took over several beliefs current among the Hindus of his day. He did not feel or claim that he was forming a new religion. A substantial portion of his teachings, such as the doctrine of karman, rebirth and cosmological theories, was common with and formed part of the tenets of the Upanishads.[1] According to R. C. Dutt it would be historically wrong to suppose that Gautama Buddha consciously set himself up as a founder of a new religion. On the contrary he believed to the last that he was proclaiming only the ancient and pure form of religion.[2] It is of course true that he did not accept the authority of the Vedas but, as we have seen, the Upanishads themselves were hesitant to accept the authority of the earlier Vedic texts and many later religio-philosophical sects included within the Hindu or Brāhmaṇical fold, did not at all accept the Vedas as authoritative. Similarly, the opposition to the cult of sacrifice and Brāhmaṇical claim of superiority on the basis of birth is found within Hindu society itself. The Buddha himself called his teachings the ancient way (*purāṇaṁ maggaṁ*) trod by ancient enlightened men (*pubbakehi sammāsaṁbuddhehi*). As Coomaraswamy has contended, the more profound is one's study of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism, the more difficult it becomes for him to distinguish between the two.[3] P. V. Kane asserts that the Buddha himself was merely a reformer of "the Hindu religion as practised in his time."[4] According to Rhys Davids "Gotama was born, brought up and lived and died a Hindu" and "Buddhism grew and flourished within the fold of orthodox belief."[5] R. G. Basak goes to the extent of maintaining that "It may be declared that Buddhism is another phase of Hinduism and not a heterodox system of Indian philosophy."[6] K. N Upadhyaya maintains that Buddhism "was a departure from the orthodoxy of the tradition, though not from the tradition as a whole."[7] Mrs. Rhys Davids has

[1]Kane, *op. cit.*

[2]Dutt, R. C., *Buddhism and Buddhist Civilization in India*, 1983, pp. 3, 5.

[3]Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 452.

[4]Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1004.

[5]*Buddhism*, pp. 83, 85.

[6]Basak, R. G., 'The Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Thought', *Bulletin of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, Calcutta, XIV, No. 9, 1963, pp. 333–4.

[7]Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 105.

also opined that the Tripiṭakas do not show any rupture with Brāhmaṇas and what the Buddha preached was in agreement with the central tenets of Brāhmaṇism.[1] According to R. C. Mitra also the Buddha was the child of that noble culture which is generally known as Brāhmaṇism.[2] Similarly Radhakrishnan has opined that "the Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. He was restating with a new emphasis the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization." Further, "Buddhism did not start as a new and independent religion. It was an offshoot of the more ancient faith of the Hindus, perhaps a schism or a heresy. The Buddha came to fulfil, not to destroy."[3] Against this almost unanimous opinion of modern scholars, the claim that Buddhism existed as a separate religion in the age of the Buddha appears to be as inaccurate as the assertion that Makkhali Gosāla founded a new religion. If Buddhism became a separate religion at all, it was a later development in its history.

But Buddhism probably never became a fully separate religion, at least in ancient India, though it did acquire a distinct character of its own in other countries, where it could develop outside the pale of Hinduism. Despite the attempts of some modern Buddhists, who emphasize the differences between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇical sects, our ancients believed that they belonged to a common cultural heritage. That is why in the same family different individuals could worship different deities. As is well-known, most of the Buddhist philosophers came from the Brāhmaṇa families. Further, kings in ancient India apparently regarded Buddhism as a part of the Hindu cultural world. Aśoka, though personally a Buddhist, gave help and support to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas both. Similarly the rulers of the Imperial Gupta dynasty, who were generally Paramabhāgavatas, patronized Buddhism also. Narasiṁhagupta II was officially a Paramabhāgavata, though according to Yuan Chwang he personally followed the path of the Buddha. Similarly Harsha of Kanauj and Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa were the worshippers of Śiva but showed every respect to the Buddha. In the family of Harsha his ancestors worshipped Sūrya, his elder brother worshipped the Buddha and he himself was a devotee of Śiva. The Maitraka rulers

[1]*IHQ*, X, pp. 276–84.

[2]Mitra, R. C., *Viśvabhāratī Annals*, VI, pp. 150–5.

[3]Radhakrishnan, Foreword (p. ix, xiii) of *2500 Years of Buddhism*, ed. by Bapat.

were also generally Śaivas, but gave lavish grants to the Buddhists. The Bhaumа-kara kings of Orissa and the Kārkoṭas of Kashmir also followed Brāhmaṇical religion, but patronised Buddhism also. The common man in ancient India worshipped Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist gods simultaneously (unless one happened to be an *ekāntika* in his religious beliefs). Thus, despite the attempts of some modern Buddhists to the contrary, it would seem that our ancients looked upon Buddhism as a part of general Hindu world. The same point emerges from the fact that the historical development of Buddhism has been parallel to Hinduism: under the impact of devotional Paurāṇika religion it developed devotional Mahāyānism and under the impact of Tāntrikism it developed its own Tāntrika sects. The complete assimilation of Buddhism by Paurāṇika Hinduism, which is a fact of history and which scholars like L. M. Joshi are constrained to accept, could have taken place only if the two belonged to the same culture-complex and had a common basis. That is why for the ancient Hindus the change over to the worship of the Buddha was no more different than the change from the worship of Vishṇu to the worship of Śiva. There were no doubt fierce disputations between the Brāhmanical and Buddhist philosophers but such disputations took place also among the various Buddhist philosophical sects, as well as among orthodox schools. Therefore one can hardly subscribe to the view that Buddhism in ancient India was not a part of the larger Hindu tradition and that there was something like a separate Buddhist culture. Buddhism was an off-shoot of the Śramaṇa tradition which was certainly non-Vedic, but it was one of the two main strands of our religious tradition the various facets of which collectively produced the complex fabric of Hindu civilization.

Impact of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism on Each Other

However, one can easily concede that Buddhism has contributed a lot to the formation and evolution of the various aspects of Indian culture. But now-a-days there is a tendency among Buddhist scholars to exaggerate its contribution which we wish to controvert here. For example, as noted above, Joshi has asserted that Buddhism constituted "the dominant stand" of Indian culture. He also maintains that "the Hindus worship the Buddha because their religion is largely based on the teachings of the Buddha"[1] and that as a result of "assimilation of Buddhism the Vedic Brāhmaṇism reshaped itself

[1]Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 330.

into Paurāṇic Hinduism."[1] But to regard Buddhism (the history of which began in the sixth century and which disappeared from the country altogether in the twelfth century) as constituting the dominant strand in the fabric of culture as compared to Brāhmaṇical tradition (the known history of which began about two thousand years earlier than the birth of the Buddha, which is still the most popular and dominant strand of our culture and in which Buddhism itself was merged) is, to say the least, illogical and historically inaccurate. It can scarcely be doubted that the essential features of the main current of post-Buddha Hinduism—the doctrines of Bhakti, *avatāravāda*, *pūjā* ritual, image worship, etc.—could not evolve from the main teachings of the Buddha—sorrowism (*dukkhavāda*), Four Noble Truths, Eight-fold Path, etc. The Hindu thinkers deduced the main features of their religion from the various Vedic and Upanishadic texts, Smṛtis, Epics and Purāṇas. The later Brāhmaṇa texts (which refer to several *avatāras*), the *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (which refers to Bhakti), the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali and the *Gītā* (which provides the classical exposition of these doctrines and also sanction for the *pūjā* ritual) prove the antiquity of Paurāṇika religion. The *Indica* of Megasthenes and the Ghosundi, Besnagar and Nanaghat inscriptions also prove that some sects of Paurāṇika Hinduism had already emerged in the pre-Christian centuries. Therefore the emergence of devotionalism in Mahāyāna Buddhism (which cannot be placed much earlier than first century A.D.) must have been the result of the impact of Paurāṇika Hinduism on it, and not the *vice-versa*.

It, however, does not mean that Buddhism did not play any role in the religious evolution of the country. The point which we want to emphasize is only that the impact of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism has been mutual and that borrowing by Buddhism from Brāhmaṇism has been far more than the *vice-versa*. Firstly, it may be noted that even in the hey-day of its popularity Buddhism did not enjoy absolute supremacy as a religion. Further, as pointed out by Satkari Mookerjee the intellectual power of the Buddhist saṅgha "was maintained only by the continual accession of learned Brāhmaṇas into the Buddhist fold. From the very beginning, the pillars of the Church were constituted by its Brāhmaṇa adherents. Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Mahākaśyapa were Brāhmaṇas. In the later career of the Buddhist Order, the intellectual stalwarts in philoso-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

phy, logic, ethics, poetry, and drama were almost entirely recruited from the priestly class." Buddhism maintained its importance, and commanded the admiration and reverence of the intelligentsia and aristocracy, so long as it possessed men of surpassing spiritual power and intellectual acumen. "The Buddhist patriarchs, such as Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Diṅnāga, Dharmakīrti, Dharmottara and their like, were born in Brāhmaṇa families, educated in Vedic lore, and reared in orthodox tradition. They were intellectual giants and produced works of subtle dialectic and overpowering logical cogency in support of Buddhist tenets."[1] Secondly, several tenets of the Upanishadic teachings were adopted by Buddhism. For example, the Buddha agreed with the earlier Upanishadic thinkers in criticizing the Vedic animal sacrifices, priestcraft and worship of nature deities. Like the Upanishadic thinkers he emphasized the superiority of inner awakening[2] over external ceremonies, and stressed the operation of laws of karman, moral retribution and rebirth. Here Buddhism was more influenced by the earlier Śramaṇic ideology which had already influenced the Upanishads themselves. In its turn Buddhism might have influenced the philosophy of the *Gītā*. For example its concept of nirvāṇa, which was itself modified version of the Upanishadic concept of the Absolute, might have influenced the notion of Brahma-Nirvāṇa of the *Gītā*.[3] It is also remotely possible that the concept of the *sthitaprajña* of the *Gītā* was influenced by Buddhism.[4] On its part the *Gītā* appears to have influenced several verses of the *Dhammapada*.[5] Some scholars believe that the Buddhist approach "found a deeply sympathetic response in the *Rāmāyaṇa*",[6] while Fausboll and Max Muller have found parallels between certain passages belonging to *Dhammapada* on the one hand and the *Manu Smṛti* and the *Mahābhārata* on the other.[7] However, the vexed question of literary chronology makes it impossible to determine as to which was the borrower side. Similarly, it is difficult to assess as to how far the emphasis in Bhāgavatism on the principle of *ahiṁsā* as found in the *Mahābhārata*

[1] *CHI*, I, p. 578.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 598.
[3] *Gītā*, II.72; V.24-26.
[4] Joshi, *op. cit*., p. 333.
[5] Cf. *Gītā*, VI.5-6 with *Dhammapada*, 160, 165.
[6] Gokhale, V. V., 'Kṛshṇa and Buddhist Literature', *Cultural Forum*, 1968, Vol. 36, p. 73.
[7] Joshi, *op. cit*., p. 334 f.

and the *Gītā*, which was the direct result of Upanishadic teachings, was strengthened by Buddhism (and Jainism). With *ahiṁsā*, the popularity of vegetarianism also increased in all the Indian religions, though here it must be remembered that in Buddhism *ahiṁsā* meant non-killing, not non-meat-eating; for the Buddha himself remained a meat-eater throughout his life.

In the historical period, with the advent of the Paurāṇika religion, the worship of images and symbols was introduced in India. Buddhism also became a positive force in the early centuries of the Christian era. Inspired by the Paurāṇika religion the Mahāyāna theology propounded the doctrine of the eternal Buddha, which was not distinguishable from the absolute Brahman of the Upanishads. The cult of bodhisattvas, who make it the mission of their life to bring solace to suffering mankind and to elevate their moral and spiritual equipment, exercised a powerful influence upon the popular mind.[1] It represented a positive reaction against the extreme pessimism and other worldliness of the early exponents of Buddhism.[2] The emergence of Mahāyāna "led to the creation of poetry, drama, philosophy, and an exalted code of selfless ethics. Instead of seeking private and personal salvation, people came to value the service of fellow-beings to be the surer and better path to higher life. In the Gandhāra school of sculpture and architecture, and in its national orientation, which found its consummation in the Gupta period, and in the cave-paintings of Ajanta, we find a resurgence of positive devotion and love."[3]

Buddhism also borrowed the pantheon of Brāhmaṇism. Not only the demi-gods such as the Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and Nāgas are common to both, the old Vedic gods Indra and Brahmā were also worshipped by the Buddhists. In Buddhism Avalokiteśvara is called Maheśvara (an epithet of Śiva), and Mañjuśrī is often called Kumārabhūta (Kumāra Kārttikeya). The Tāntrika pantheon of both the religions is almost identical. Tārā, Kālī, Chāmuṇḍā, Sarasvatī, Vārāhī, Hārīti, Mahākāla, Gaṇeśa, etc. were worshipped by both.[4]

The practice of visiting *tīrthas* is as old as the Vedic age, though in that period it signified a place where animal sacrifice was performed. In the Paurāṇika religion *tīrthayātrā* concept was trans-

[1]Mookerjee, S., *CHI*, I, p. 590.
[2]*Ibid.*
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 590 f.
[4]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

formed probably under the impact of Buddhism.[1]

The problem whether or not the Advaita Vedānta philosophy as expounded by Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and Śrī Harsha was influenced by the Mādhyamika philosophy with which it shows unmistakable points of contact and similarities, is highly controversial. Some ancient scholars believed that Śaṅkara borrowed much from the Buddhists, so much so that they accused him of being a Buddhist in disguise (*prachchhanna Bauddha*). But Śrī Harsha vigorously controverted this accusation. Several modern scholars also agree with Śrī Harsha. For example T. R. V. Murti excludes the possibility of doctrinal borrowing by the Vedāntins altogether because "each had a totally different background of tradition and conception of reality." He concedes the possibility of the borrowing of technique only.[2] According to S. Mookerjee "it is almost a truism that the reorientation of idealistic thought by Aśvaghoṣa, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu brought it perilously near to the absolutism of the Upaniṣads .... It would be a mistake to suppose that Śaṅkarāchārya was indebted to Vasubandhu or Aśvaghoṣa for his monistic philosophy. The Buddhist philosophers owed their inspiration to the Upaniṣads, when they gave a monistic interpretation to the doctrines of the Buddha. Śaṅkarāchārya derived his monistic inspiration direct from the Upaniṣads, and only worked out the negative logic in order to vindicate his position. In this negative enterprise, he was assuredly influenced by the Mādhyamika polemics, and he utilized them for reinforcing his logical standpoint. This was previously done also by Gauḍapāda in his *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and Śaṅkara only followed in the footsteps of this mastermind, who is by tradition accredited to have been the teacher of Śaṅkara's own teacher Govindapāda."[3] G. C. Pande also subscribes to this theory.[4] However, it may still be conceded that "though victorious, Śaṅkarāchārya adopted many things of value from the Buddhists. The differentiation of reality into three grades, viz., absolute (*pāramārthika*), empirical (*vyāvahārika*) and apparent (*prātibhāsika*), is obviously influenced by the similar procedure adopted by the Mādhyamikas. We do not find any allusion to such a distinction in the orginal Upanishads."[5]

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 116-7.

[3] *CHI*, I, p. 593 f.

[4] *Origins*, p. 555 f.

[5] *CHI*, I, p. 594; cf. Swami Ganeshwarananda, 'Buddhism and Vedānta', *Vedānta and the West*, 180, July 1966, pp. 7-16.

Chapter 15

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

As the teachings of the Buddha aimed at the experience of Enlightenment, Buddhism did not concern itself much with the collective life of man on social and political level. It does not tell its lay-followers, for example, how many wives they may have or what form of government they should support. But the existence of the *saṅgha* itself suggests that the external conditions were not regarded as wholly irrelevant to the development of mental attitudes on which the realization of Enlightenment depends. Some social and political ideas are, therefore, found scattered here and there throughout the *Tripiṭaka* or may be culled from the basic assumptions inherent in the teachings of the Master.

Buddhist Theory of the Origin of Social Classes

The earliest ideas of the Buddhists on the problem of the origin of social classes are found in the *Aggañña sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.[1] In this *Sutta* two young Brāhmaṇas, who had become Buddhist monks tell the Buddha that they were being condemned by their fellow Brāhmaṇas for they had left 'the best class', 'the genuine children of Brahmā born of his mouth', to join 'a low class', the descendants of Brahmā's feet. Thereupon, in order to prove the hollowness of the Brāhmaṇa's claim to descent from Brahmā's mouth, the Buddha traced the whole history of creation in the present *kalpa* from the beginning. He explained how after a long, long period the world is dissolved, the beings are reborn in the world of the gods of brilliance (*Ābhassara devas*). Then the world begins to evolve again. The beings descended from the world of brilliance are reborn with the same qualities as before. They are 'made of mind, self-luminous, traversing the air, continuing in glory.' As the earth emerges out of the water like rice-scum odorous and sweet, the beings taste it through greed and lose their self-luminosity, their bodies acquire solidity and differences of comeliness. Then appears vegetation, at

[1]For a more detailed discussion on the *Aggaññasutta*, see Ghoshal, U. N., *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, p. 62 ff.

first of a low and afterwards of a high order, and ultimately the huskless self-ripening rice makes its appearance. The beings feast upon it and acquire greater solidity in their bodies. The differences of sex arise with resulting passions among men and the women. The beings filled with lust build households and begin to store rice and thus create the institution of private property. As this leads to the disappearance of the self-ripening rice, the beings gather together and decide to divide and demarcate their rice-fields. Gradually the four evils of theft, censure, lying and violence come to be known. Thereupon the beings decide to select a person who should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should rightly be censured and should banish him who deserves to be banished, and they agree to give him in return a portion of their rice. They select the most handsome and able person among themselves He is called by the three 'standing phrases' of *Mahāsammata*. ('one who is chosen by the multitude'), *khattiya* (*Kshatriya*), ('one who is lord of the fields'), and *rājā* ('one who gratifies the others in accordance with *dhamma*'). This becomes the signal for the division of social classes.[1] "The election of *Mahāsammata* was the origin of the class (*maṇḍala*) of khattiyas. Again, as certain beings distressed at the sins of men retired to the forest to meditate while others lived in the outskirts of villages and towns 'making books', they were known by 'the standing phrases', Brāhmaṇas ('those who put away evil'), *jhāyaka* ('those who meditate') and *ajhyāyakas* ('those who teach the *Vedas*'): this was the origin of the class (*maṇḍala*) of Brāhmaṇas. Others who adopted the married state and became proficient in the trades were known by 'the standing phrase' of Vessas, and this was the origin of the class of Vessas. Still others living by hunting and such low crafts were called Suddas. Again as men of the above classes misprizing their own duties (*dhammas*) left their homes for the homeless life, they were known as recluses. Explaining the origin of each of these classes, the Master adds at the end the refrain, 'Their origin was from those very beings and no others, like unto themselves and not unlike, and it took place according to *dharma* and not according to its reverse.' Finally, the Master says that whoever among these four classes as a monk has

[1]Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 63. The ancient Japanese did not accept the theory of social contract, considering it necessary for their own country the continuity of the dynasty descending from a divine ancestor.

destroyed all moral taint and has attained perfect knowledge is declared to be the chief of men in virtue of *dhamma* : for *dhamma* is deemed as the highest by men both in this world and the next."[1]

This account of the evolution of the social orders is reproduced briefly in the late canonical works written in Sanskrit or in mixed Sanskrit[2] such as the *Mahāvastu* which claims to belong to the *Vinaya* of the Lokottaravādins, a branch of the Mahāsaṅghikas. A more complete account carrying the story down to the rise of social divisions is repeated in the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. It has been preserved in its Tibetan version (the *Dulva* section of the *Kanjur*) while a considerable portion of its Sanskrit original has been discovered at Gilgit in Kashmir. In these works also a reference is made to the origin of social divisions. "The beings, we read, who lived away from the villages were called Brāhmaṇas (detached minds), those who were not given to contemplation but devoted to study were called *pāṭhakas* (readers), and those who lived away from the forest and in villages were called villagers, while others who were engaged in handicrafts and other domestic occupations were called Vaiśyas : after the origin of these three castes there arose a fourth one, namely, *śramaṇas* consisting of Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇas and Vaiśyas who left their homes for a homeless state and completely retired from the world."[3]

In this Buddhist account the origin of "the social order in the sense of creation of the standard list of the four classes out of the original undifferentiated stock is held to have been effected by the process of division of labour, the operating factor being the norm (or standard) of the groups concerned. The resulting order of precedence of the classes is in accordance with the Buddhist social pattern in which the Kshatriya takes precedence over the Brāhmaṇa, while the monk of high learning and character is assigned the foremost position in society."[4] It also shows that the Buddhists explained the rise of class-divisions, not as in the Brāhmaṇical canon by the dogma of divine will but by the voluntary selection of occupations by the classes concerned under the influence of their respective norms or standards.[5]

[1]Ghoshal, *ibid.*
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 258 ff.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 259.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 64.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 65.

Buddhist Attitude to Social Obligations

The Vedic society subscribed only to the *trivarga* doctrine—the doctrine that the goal of human life is to pursue *kāma* and *artha* in accordance with *dharma*. The addition of the concept of *moksha* as the highest goal of life to the doctrine of *trivarga* leading to the emergence of the doctrine of *chaturvarga* or *purushārthas*, was obviously a development when the Upanishadic thinkers accepted the attainment of Brahma as the *summum bonum* of life. However from the practical point of view the notion of obligation of giving in response to what one has received from society and gods continued to be the key-stone in the arch of Vedic social ethics.[1] In contrast to this, Buddhism cut man loose from the sense of dependence on gods and also struck a blow on the doctrine of social obligations. It replaced gods by the force of *karman*; what man receives he does not owe to gods but to his past actions. Further, as man cannot avoid moral consequences of his actions, he must eschew egoism, violence, etc. which are, according to the Buddhist view, the main evils, and pursue morality. Hence it is in the corpus of monastic rules that one can find concrete shape and form of their ideal of asceticism. These rules tended to regulate food, drink, clothes, dwelling, begging of alms and religious practices of monks down to the minutest details. Even for the lay-men and lay-women ascetic sects formulated such rules though these were much less vigorous in nature. For example, the Jainas distinguished the *mahāvratas* of the monks from the *aṇuvratas* of the laity. Similarly, the *Sigālovāda sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the Buddhists describes the *gihivinaya* or the disciplinary rules for the Buddhist laity. Means of livelihood (*ājīva*), for example, are of two kinds, right (*samyak*) and wrong (*mithyā*). "The Buddha refused to concede that a man's life could be compartmentalized, with his professional conduct governed by one set of standards and his private life by another, or that the former constituted a neutral field to which ethical considerations need not apply. He went so far, indeed, as to prohibit essentially unethical occupations, such as those of the butcher, the dealer in poisons, and the weapon-maker, and to make Right Means of Livelihood (*samyak-ājīva*) the fifth member of the Āryan Eightfold Path."[2]

[1]Kane, P. V., *HD*, II, Pt. 2, pp. 942–46.

[2]Sangharakshita Bhikshu, in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. by A. L. Basham, Oxford, 1984, p. 97.

Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change : Was Buddha a Social Revolutionary ?

It is generally believed that the Buddha was a great social reformer, a believer in the equality of all human beings, a democrat and that his efforts for the emancipation of women and lower castes created a sort of social revolution in society.[1] In order to evaluate this belief and find out whether or not the Buddha was a social revolutionary we should (i) not only analyse his stand on the various social problems of his time dispassionately, but also (ii) compare his ideas with other contemporary thinkers and religious leaders, and (iii) also compare them with the ideas of the thinkers of the preceding age. Without undertaking the last two exercises it will not be possible to determine whether or not he proposed something 'revolutionary' in social life.

Buddha and Caste System : Current View and its Criticism

A proof generally advanced in support of the view that the Buddha was a social revolutionary is based on the assumption that he attacked caste system as it existed at that time. According to Ambedkar, "No caste, no inequality, no superiority : all are equal. That is what he (that is, the Buddha) stood for."[2] Rhys Davids has stressed that Buddhism "ignores completely and absolutely all advantages and disadvantages arising from birth, occupation or social status and sweeps away all barriers and disabilities arising from the arbitrary rules of mere ceremonial or social impurity."[3] According to some recent historians Buddhism produced the only consciously egalitarian social philosophy in ancient India[4] and Buddha's professed commitment to human equality was nothing short of a revolution.[5] We, however, feel that this assumption is

[1]Nehru, J. L., *Discovery of India*, 1946, p. 141; Roy, M. N., *From Savagery to Civilization*, p. 9; Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, pp. 301–6; Pratap Chandra, 'Buddhism as Instrument of Social Change', *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, 1983, pp. 81–92; Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, 1976, Ch. IV and V; Prasad, N. K., 'The Democratic Attitude of the Buddha, *JOI*, 12, 1963, pp. 299–310.

[2]Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, 1957, p. 301.

[3]*Dialogues*, III, p. 78.

[4]Pratap Chandra, 'Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change', *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, p. 93.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 94; cf. also Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Ch. IV.

only marginally correct. The belief that the Buddha believed in the social equality of men is as much untrue as the theory that he believed in the social equality of both the sexes (*infra*). It is generally held that he was prepared to accept differences between man and man, but based not on heredity; for this he relied on the criterion of wisdom, deeds and virtue. In other words he opposed the caste hierarchy based on birth as was advocated by the Vedic religion. In this connection we would like to draw the attention of our readers to the following facts:

(1) The Buddha did not reject the notion of caste system. He merely gave a new twist to it. As noted above, in the *Aggañña sutta* he rejects the divine origin theory of the caste system and instead ties it up with the evolutionary process. In this sutta he opines that all castes arose because of the laziness and greed of men. The first to emerge were the Khattiyas, so called because their job was looking after the field (*kheta*). The first Khattiya was elected to the position of king or Mahāsammata because he was "the handsomest, the most favoured, the most attractive, the most capable." Next arose the Brāhmaṇas (those who put away evil) who became abstainers from worldly pursuits. They were the *jhāyakas* or the meditating ones and *ajjhāyakas* or those who teach. Then there were the Vessas who indulged in various trades and the Suddas who subsisted on hunting.[1] From this it is apparent that: (a) The Buddha did not question the wisdom behind organising the society into the four varṇas. (b) In his own scheme he made Kshatriyas superior to the Brāhmaṇas. (c) He had nothing to add so far as the last two varṇas were concerned. Thus his whole exercise boils down to one point only: the Kshatriyas are superior to Brāhmaṇas.

(2) Buddha's partiality for the Kshatriya caste is apparent from several other facts. Firstly, in this sutta and other Buddhist texts in the enumeration of the castes the Khattiyas are always mentioned first.[2] In the *Dīgha Nikāya* (III. 1.15) even a Brāhmaṇa mentions Khattiyas before Brāhmaṇas though it does not fit well with his following words: "Of these (four castes) three, Khattiya, Vessa and Sudda, exist only to serve the Brāhmaṇas." In this belief the Buddha had the good company of the Jainas who also claimed higher status for the Kshatriyas. As we have seen, the Śvetāmbaras held the belief

[1]Ghoshal, U. N., *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, 1959, p. 63.
[2]Fick, R., *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, p. 84.

that the embryo of Mahāvīra was transferred from the womb of the Brāhmaṇī Devānandā to that of the Kshattriyāṇī Triśalā, since it was held that "a Brāhmaṇa or another woman of low family was not worthy to give birth to a Tīrthaṅkara." A similar attitude is found in early Buddhism, for in the *Nidānakathā* and the *Lalitavistara* it is said that when the future Buddha reflected in which caste he will be re-born, he decided in favour of the Khattiya caste because at that time it was the highest.[1] It is an open advocacy of the superiority of the Kshatriya caste. In the *Ambaṭṭha sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* we are told that the Brāhmaṇa Ambaṭṭha went to the Buddha and accused the Śākyas of being rude to the Brāhmaṇas. In answer the Buddha praised the Śākyas and tried to humble the pride of Ambaṭṭha by describing the Kāṇhāyana gotra to which he belonged as having been founded by a slave of the king Ikshvāku. He went on to declare that the status of the Kshattriyas was higher than that of the Brāhmaṇas because the Brāhmaṇas accept the offspring of an inter-marriage between the Brāhmaṇas and the Kshattriyas while the Kshattriyas do not.[2] The Buddha then quotes a *gāthā* supposed to have been enunciated by Brahmā Sanatkumāra according to which "among those who follow the lineage or gotra, the Kshatriya has superiority. However, the person who has learning and character is superior to men as well as gods." It is interesting that in order to prove the low origin of Ambaṭṭha, the Buddha cited the (incorrect) proof from the early Vedic age. Apparently he believed that no one with a lowly birth could improve his social status by *jātyutkarsha*; the Brāhmaṇa society believed in such a possibility.

(3) The hostility of the Buddha to the Brāhmaṇas becomes apparent from the following facts also : In his various suttas we find repeated assertions that the Brāhmaṇas lost their honour in society (in which they enjoyed only the second place) because they had become corrupt. But nowhere does he refer to the decline of the Kshatriyas. In other words he tacitly assumes that the Kshatriyas were still as pure and worthy of their status as they were in the earlier ages. In the Jātaka stories also Kshatriyas of degraded character are rarely, if at all, mentioned; in them it is only the Brāhmaṇas who are usually described as men of mean character. They

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 385 f.

[2] Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 53. This statement of the Buddha is incorrect. It finds no parallel in the Brāhmaṇical literature.

not only eat beaf (e.g. in the *Matakabhatta Jātaka*) but indulge in the most despicable deeds—even the Brāhmaṇa housewives are shown as grossly corrupt behaving like prostitutes (e.g. in the *Rādha Jātaka*, the *Kosiya Jātaka* etc.). In the words of Fick, "in many cases the Brāhmaṇas are pictured as greedy, shameless and immoral and serve as a foil to the Khattiyas who play the part of virtuous and noble humanity."[1]

(4) Acceptance in marriage and commensality have been the touch-stone of caste system. But the Buddha was a firm believer in them—at least so far as his own Kshatriya caste was concerned. Thus according to him the Brāhmaṇas were inferior to the Kshatriyas not only because a woman of impure ancestry could be accepted by the former and not by the latter, but also because the latter would not eat with her or her progeny while the former would. The Buddha was thus loud in denouncing the superior birth theory if it helped the Brāhmaṇas, but changed his stand if it helped his own caste.

(5) In the *Vāseṭṭha sutta* when the Brāhmaṇa Vāseṭṭha, apparently basing his view on the Purushasūkta of the *RV*, claims that the Brāhmaṇas are superior to others because they were born out of the mouth of Brahmā (not neuter *Brahman*), the Buddha ridicules him by saying that like other human beings Brāhmaṇas are also given birth by women. Here the Buddha gives a populist argument and takes the Purushasūkta imagery literally which can hardly be regarded as the intention of the Vedic *ṛshis*. Similarly, his argument that the fourfold caste system was not universal, states the obvious and does not prove anything.

(6) What the Buddha gave with one hand, took away with the other, for though he theoretically rejected the principle of determining one's social status on the basis of birth in a caste (which, as we have seen, was not an unqualified rejection and was applied in the case of Brāhmaṇas only) he accepted the concept of social superiority or inferiority on the basis of *kula* or family, which in his thinking was determined by one's birth. As we have seen, in the *Ambaṭṭha sutta* he tries to convince the Brāhmaṇa Ambaṭṭha that he was inferior to the Śākyas because he was born in an inferior *kula*. He argues that even the most degraded of the Kshatriyas is superior to a Brāhmaṇa because the former is born in a higher

[1]Fick, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

kula. In the Jātakas this point has been illustrated by a number of stories. In the *Sigāla Jātaka* the son of a barber dies for the love of a Lichchhavi girl. The Buddha denounces him for his ambition because being born in a low *kula* a barber should not covet the hand of a Kshatriya girl. In the *Siṁhakotthuka Jātaka*, Kokākila, a monk born in an inferior *kula*, wants to recite the religious texts as the monks born in higher *kulas* were doing. The matter is brought to the notice of the Buddha who calls the aspirant monk and rebukes him thoroughly and tells him that while the monks born in superior *kulas* were like lions, he was like the offspring of a jackal. In the *Siṁhachamma Jātaka* the same Kokākila is likened with the ass who wants to acquire the status of lion by wearing the lion-skin. Many other Jātaka stories emphasize the importance of being born in a superior *kula*. This emphasis on *kula* nullified whatever influence Buddha's partial and lop-sided denunciation of the caste system might have exerted.[1]

(7) The Buddha is supposed to have attacked the Brāhmaṇical caste system from several angles. Firstly, it is maintained that instead of birth he defined castes with reference to one's qualities, inclination and vocation.[2] In the *Soṇadaṇḍa sutta* the Brāhmaṇa Soṇadaṇḍa declares that there are five pre-requisites for being regarded as a Brāhmaṇa—Varṇa (pure descent on both sides), Jāti (fine personality), Mantra (knowledge of the Vedas), Śīla (virtue) and Pāṇḍitya (learning). But when the Buddha presses him to declare what is indispensable out of these five, the Brāhmaṇa agrees that only the last two are necessary to make a person Brāhmaṇa.[3] (Here it may be noted that in the praise of virtue and learning ritual conduct and Vedic learning were expressly excluded). In the *Assalāyana sutta* when the Brāhmaṇa Assalāyana claims that Brāhmaṇa is the superior varṇa, the Buddha tells him that people of all the varṇas are of the same human species, capable of interbreeding. In the *Vāseṭṭha sutta* when two Brāhmaṇas come to him with the problem: does one become a Brāhmaṇa by birth or by deed, he explains the difference between species (which differ in physical features) and human classes (which rest on the vocations of men). A man may become a trader, a soldier or may adopt any other

[1]Cf. Niyogi, *Jātakakālīna Bhāratīya Saṁskṛti*.

[2]Cf. Saha, K., 'The Brāhmaṇa in Pāli Literature', *Social Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 49–51.

[3]Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 178.

profession. But a Brāhmaṇa is one who has high moral qualities and is detached and wise; one does not become a Brāhmaṇa by birth.[1] At a later date Aśvaghosha, who argued that Brāhmaṇahood consists neither in birth or jāti (because we know that several famous sages were born through misecegenation and in that case no Brāhmaṇa can lose his caste as the Smṛtis maintain), nor in body (because then burning the dead body would cause *brahmahatyā*), nor in learning (because then learned Śūdras would be Brāhmaṇas) and nor in conduct (because then low caste people with good conduct would be Brāhmaṇas). Aśvaghosha then concludes that the Brāhmaṇahood consists in the purity of heart and that all men belong to one varṇa which gets divided into four on the basis of vocations or functions. Many other suttas of the Buddha and other early Buddhist texts may be quoted where the Brāhmaṇahood is defined in terms of qualities and not birth. But this definition (or rather definitions) of a true Brāhmaṇa had no relationship with actual social stratification. It was like defining a Vaishṇava as the one who understands the grief of others (*Vaishṇava jana to teṇe kahiye jo jāne pīḍa parāyī re*). It is a good sentiment; nobody can have any quarrel with it. But it is the definition of a good man, not of a Vaishṇava. Logically such a definition is no definition at all, for the question still remains who, among those who understand the grief of others, may be regarded as a member of the Vaishṇava sect. Similarly, the qualities of a Brāhmaṇa as enumerated by the Buddha are the qualities of every good man. The Buddha himself must have looked for these qualities in the members of other social groups also. Therefore his definition of a Brāhmaṇa is no definition at all; it does not make Brāhmaṇas a social group—as the Kshatriyas were in the eyes of the Buddha himself. As the Buddha does not give any emphasis on the qualities necessary for the Kshatriyas and other social groups, his repeated attempts to denounce his Brāhmaṇa contemporaries by comparing their 'real' character with the 'ideal' character of a true Brāhmaṇa of his own definition only proves his prejudice against Brāhmaṇas and his partiality for the Kshatriyas.

(8) The Buddhist protest against caste system, whatever its limitations, was not 'revolutionary' in another sense also : it was not something new or radical; it was shared by all contemporary

[1]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 55 f.

religious sects. The Jaina attitude to this problem is evidenced by the *Uttarājjhyaṇa* where a Brāhmaṇa turned monk instructs the Brāhmaṇas about what is a true sacrifice and who is a true Brāhmaṇa. "The binding of animals (to the sacrificial pole), all the Vedas and sacrifices, being cause of sin, cannot save the sinner, for his karman is very powerful .... One becomes a Śramaṇa by equanimity, a Brāhmaṇa by chastity, a Muni by knowledge and a Tāpasa by penance. By one's actions one becomes a Brāhmaṇa, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaiśya or a Śūdra ... him who is exempt from all karman we call a Brāhmaṇa."[1]

(9) A similar emphasis on deeds rather than birth was given in the enlightened and liberal sections of the Brāhmaṇical society. The *Chhāndogya Upa.* (IV.4) says that good conduct makes a man the best Brāhmaṇa.[2] In the *Gītā* (IV.13) Kṛshṇa declares that he created the four varṇas according to divisions of aptitude and action (*chāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛshṭaṁ guṇa-karma vibhāgaśaḥ*). Referring to this verse Telang observes, "there is nothing in the *Gītā* to indicate whether caste was hereditary."[3] According to Radhakrishnan also "The emphasis (of the *Gītā*) is on *guṇa* (aptitude) and *karma* (function) and not *jāti* (birth). The varṇa or the order to which we belong is independent of sex, birth or breeding. A class determined by temperament and vocation is not a caste determined by birth and heredity."[4] Similarly, Prof. Datta observes: "There are natural divisions among men in accordance with their intrinsic qualities and actions; their capacities and duties vary accordingly."[5]

That the *Gītā* did not believe in the rigidity of the traditional caste system is further proved when Kṛshṇa declares: "Those who take refuge in me, O Arjuna, though they are lowly born, women, Vaiśyas as well as Śūdras, they also attain to the highest goal" (IX.32). From this it is evident that the *Gītā* did not believe in the rigour of caste with regard to the practice of religion. Thus, Buddhism was obviously not the only religion to give religious rights, including the right of emancipation, to the Śūdras.

The theory as propounded in the *Gītā* is made clearer in the Ājagaraparvan of the *Mahābhārata*. Here Yudhishṭhira is asked by

[1]Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, II, p. 130 ff.

[2]Cf. Haldar, J. N., 'Caste in Early Buddhist Literature', *Social Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 45–48.

[3]*SBE*, VIII, p. 21.

[4]*The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 160–61.

[5]*The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 566.

the python, "Who O king, is a Brāhmaṇa?" and the king answers, "A Brāhmaṇa is one who evinces truth, liberality, forbearance, virtue, mildness, austerity and pity." At this the python points out that such qualities may be found in the Śūdras as well. Yudhishṭhira however sticks to his definition and insists that anyone possessing these qualities should be called a Brāhmaṇa. On being further questioned he explains that birth is not the criterion of caste and men are all alike in their social and sexual behaviour. "O great serpent, if sacramentally purified conduct is to be found in some one, I would call him Brāhmaṇa."[1]

That the enlightened sections of the Brāhmaṇical society did not believe in the superiority or inferiority of any profession is made further clear by several other passages of the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. The *Gītā* declares: "man attains perfection devoted each to his own duty" (XVIII.45) and that "all actions are associated with (more or less) defects as fire with smoke" (XVIII.48). In the Vanaparvan of the *Mahābhārata* in the dialogue between a meat-seller and a Brāhmaṇa, the former is considered better than the penance-performing Brāhmaṇa because he, the meat-seller, discharges his duties devotedly for the good of others. Similarly in the dialogue between the pedlar and Jājali (Śāntiparvan of the *Mahābhārata*) the profession of pedlary is held superior if followed honestly. By these instances we are not trying to prove that the Brāhmaṇa society did not believe in the rigours of caste system, for its main current certainly believed in the caste system of most rigid type. What we want to emphasize is only the fact that many Brāhmaṇical texts and thinkers were as much liberal as the Buddhists, probably more, in their social outlook.

(10) It is certainly true that Buddhism recognised the right of and gave opportunity to even Śūdras to enter the saṅgha. But what was revolutionary about it? The other contemporary ascetic sects gave the Śūdras the same opportunity and right. Even the *Gītā*, as noted earlier, accepts it as the right of everybody to achieve emancipation. Further it may be noted that the opening of the doors of the Buddhist Church for the Śūdras and others[2] did not have much significance for society. It appears that "the Buddhist protest was satisfied when the Buddhist monks obtained a venerable position in

[1]*Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 59.

[2]However, as pointed out by Oldenberg, no Chāṇḍāla is known to have been accepted in the Buddhist Church.

society without reference to their caste origin."[1] But any one from the low castes who became a monk acquired reverence not as a member of a low caste but as a monk. Therefore, so far as caste system was concerned, it was not at all shaken by the acceptance of the Śūdras in the Buddhist Church.

(11) It must also be remembered that the Buddhist Church itself was greatly influenced by caste system, for its monks usually failed to forget their caste antecedents. Monks like Upāli who belonged to low castes and yet got respectful position were few. It is well-known that Devadatta refused to pay homage to Upāli. Yaśa, a minister of Aśoka, though himself a Buddhist, wanted the emperor to discriminate among the monks according to their original caste. The attitude of the Buddhist laity was also not anti-caste. Therefore, the impact of Buddha's teaching on caste system was minimal except on those who became monks—but, as noted above, once a person became an ascetic, his caste antecedent became immaterial. It meant that the entry of some people from the low castes into the Buddhist or any other Church left the caste system unaffected.

Early Buddhism and Brāhmaṇas : Analysis of B. G. Gokhale

In recent years B. G. Gokhale has made some valuable contributions to the study of the relationship of early Buddhism with the Brāhmaṇas.[2] Here we may state his analysis and findings in brief because it touches a very vital point of the social attitudes of the Buddha and his followers. According to Gokhale by 500 B.C. Brāhmaṇa penetration had proceeded into areas that were regarded as unfit for Brāhmaṇas in the Vedic age. This was especially so in Magadha, Kosala, Avanti and parts of Dakshiṇāpatha, where the existence of *Brāhmaṇa gāmas and brahmadeya* lands indicates widespread Brāhmaṇa colonization and acquisition of large landed properties, with quasi-fedual rights. Secondly, the Brāhmaṇas, either as *purohitas* or ministerial functionaries, had come to occupy strategic positions in the political, social and cultural life in the homeland of early Buddhism. Thirdly, the Brāhmaṇa group was socially and occupationally diverse. Gokhale has divided the Brāhmaṇas of the age of the Buddha into four categories, the first of which is called

[1]Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

[2]Gokhale, B. G., 'The Early Buddhist Elite', *Journal of Indian History*, XLIII, Pt. ii, 1965, p. 391 ff.; 'Early Buddhism and Brāhmaṇas' in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A.K. Narain, pp. 67–80.

pubbakā isayo (sages of yore). These were Vasiṭṭha, Vāmadeva, Kassapa, Bhagu, Yamataggi, and others whose names figure among the composers of some of the Vedic hymns. They are called "hymn-makers" (*mantānam kattāro*), whose compositions the Brāhmaṇas of later ages simply learned by rote and recited at length. The Buddha praised their simplicity and devotion to spiritual quest, lamenting the fact that their descendants had fallen so low from the standards. There is no criticism of these sages, much less any hostility or antipathy toward them.

The second and third groups comprised professional priests such as *purohitas* and *mahāsālas* or wealthy Brāhmaṇas. The main distinction between *purohitas* and *mahāsālas* was that while all *purohitas* could be called *mahāsālas*, all *mahāsālas* were not necessarily *purohitas*. The stock description of such a Brāhmaṇa is given as "a repeater (of the sacred words), knowing the mystic verses by heart; one who had mastered the Three Vedas, with the indices, the ritual, the phonology, and the exegesis (as a fourth), and the legends as a fifth; learned in the idioms and the grammar; versed in Lokāyata sophistry, and in the theory of the signs on the body of a great man." In the *Brāhmaṇadhammika sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* the Buddha denounces his Brāhmaṇa contemporaries as creatures who have fallen from the high standards of their ancestors because of greed for material wealth. It is with these Brāhmaṇas that the Buddha had most of his argumentative encounters concerning the Brāhmaṇical claims to the purity and greatness of their "caste" or to the efficacy of their sacrificial ritual. The *Ambaṭṭha sutta* is a fairly representative piece of such polemics. Such Brāhmaṇas lived in Brāhmaṇa-gāmas, that is villages predominantly inhabited by Brāhmaṇas, or a village designated in a proprietary way for the residence and maintenance of learned Brāhmaṇas. A number of such Brāhmaṇa settlements are mentioned by name, such a Ichchhānangala, Ekasālā, Opasāda and Veṇagapura in Kosala, Ambasanda, Upatissa, Ekanāḷā, Pañchasāla and Khāṇumata in Magadha and Khomadussa in the Śākya country.[1] Besides these *Brāhmaṇa gāmas*, which were compact settlements close to important towns, even Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, and other cities, such as Āpaṇa, are also described as residences of *Brāhmaṇa mahāsālas*. Perhaps the most prosperous among them were those who enjoyed what are called *brahma-*

[1]Gokhale, in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, p. 70.

deya lands. The term *brahmadeya* is explained by the dictionary as "a most excellent gift, a royal gift, given with full powers (said of land granted by the King), a full gift." The explicit meaning attached to the gift of these lands shows that they were given in proprietary possession, whereby they became an absolute property of the donee. Secondly, it is fairly reasonable to assume that there was a transference of some administrative functions from the royal authority to the donees. Buddhaghosha makes it clear that the donee exercised quasi-royal authority and acted almost as a ruler (*chhattam ussāpetva*) and that his lands were tax-free.[1]

A good many Brāhmaṇas are mentioned as royal functionaries also. Most of them were *purohitas* to the kings of Kosala, Uttara-Pañchāla, Avanti and the Śākyas, such as Gagga, Aggidatta (father of the monk Jenta), Kevaṭṭa, Tiriṭavachchha and Asita. Others like Vassakāra were *mahāmattas* (ministers), treasurers, accountants or superintendants of water-works. The *Mahāgovinda sutta* tells the story of the mythical king Disampati and his Brāhmaṇa Govinda, whose son Jotipāla was appointed to succeed him after his death. It is also specifically said that Mahāgovinda used to tender advice to the king on matters of *attha*, later specified as *diṭṭhadhammika attha*. and had under him seven *Brāhmaṇa mahāsālas* and 700 *snātakas* (obviously a round number). It also seems certain that at this time the office of the *purohita* involved functions well beyond the performance of Brāhmaṇical rituals for the king. Vassakāra and Sunīdha, (the former specifically mentioned as Ajātasattu's *purohita*) were involved in erecting fortifications for the city of Pāṭaliputta in anticipation of an attack by the Vajjians.[2]

The Brāhmaṇas of this category claimed to belong to and were proud of their *gotta* purity. The most common *gotta* mentioned is that of Bhāradvāja; also mentioned in our texts are Brāhmaṇas belonging to Kassapa, Assalāyana, Ākāsa, Koṇḍañña, Kosiya, Kachchāyana, Gotama, Pārāsarīya, Kaṇhāyana gotras and different kinds of priests, such as *addhariyu* (*adhvaryu*) and *udichcha* Brāhmaṇas. Many of these influential Brāhmaṇas, either following the example of the kings they served, or on their own, became supporters of the Buddha and his movement. Gokhale claims that he has been able to trace the "conversion" of 49 Brāhmaṇas who declared themselves *upāsakas* in the *Nikāyas*. Of these, five were *mahāsālas* enjoying *brahmadeya*

[1]*Ibid.*, p. 71.
[2]*Ibid.*

lands. They were Chaṅkī, Kūṭadanta, Pokkharasādi, Soṇadaṇḍa and Lohichcha. One, Kāsībhāradvāja, was a very rich farmer. Others seem to be ordinary Brāhmaṇas in terms of wealth, and quite a few are mentioned simply as "one Brāhmaṇa" (*aññataro Brāhmaṇo*). In other cases, "many Brāhmaṇa householders" (*sambahulā Brāhmaṇa-gahapatikā*) are mentioned as having become *upāsakas*.[1]

The last group of Brāhmaṇas is invariably coupled with the *Samaṇas* in the stock phrase *Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇa*. It is always distinguished from the rest of the Brāhmanas in the texts of the early Buddhists. They lived in *assamas* (hermitages), as in case of Brāhmaṇa Rammaka, whose assama was in the vicinity of Sāvatthī. These conform to the picture of Uapanishadic philosophers who retired to sylvan areas for meditation and philosophical discussions. Many of the famous disciples of the Buddha such as Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Mahākassapa, the three Kassapa brothers (Uruvela, Nadi and Gayā), Vangīsa and Mogharāja came from among such groups of *samaṇas* and *paribbājakas*. The Nikāyas give us a list of ten *paribbājakas* who became *upāsakas*, the majority of whom was converted in large urban centers, such as Sāvatthī, Rājagaha and Vesālī. Names of some nine *paribbājakas* who joined the Buddhist saṅgha are also listed. Some of them, such as Sandaka, also asked their own followers to join the saṅgha and one, Achela Kassapa, joined the Order after being a *paribbājaka* for 30 years. Similarly, the same sources provide the names of some 27 Brāhmaṇas (outside of the list of famous monks who were Buddha's followers) and of these seven claimed Bhāradvāja as their *gotta*.

The verses of the *Thera-Therī Gāthās* and the biographical information given in the commentary on them contain 332 names the social composition of which gives us some idea of the nature of what Gokhale calls the Early Buddhist Elite. Of these 332, 261 were monks and 71 nuns. Of the 332, the social origins of four (three monks and one nun) are unknown. Of the rest, 134 or 40.8% (117 monks and 17 nuns) are described as being former Brāhmaṇas; 98 or over 29% (74 monks and 24 nuns) belonged to the gahapati or Vessa group; 75 or over 22% (53 monks and 22 nuns) may be said to belong to the Khattiya order; and 10 (seven monks and three nuns) may be called members of the so-called degraded classes of society. Of the 134 Brāhmaṇas in this group, 27 were scions of *mahāsāla* families, but 107 had commoner Brāhmaṇa origin.

[1]*Ibid.*, p. 72.

In the *Etadagga vagga* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the Buddha himself is attributed with statements indicating leadership in various aspects of the early Buddhist movement and the persons he considered foremost among them. This list contains the names of 41 monks and 13 nuns. Of the 41 monks, 18 belonged to the Brāhmaṇa group (43.9%), nine were Khattiyas (most of them being Śākyas), 11 belonged to the *gahapati* or Vessa class, one may be called a Sudda (Upāli, the master of the *Vinaya* was an ex-barber), and there are two whose affiliations are unknown. The *Thera-Therīgāthā* group gives us 40.8% Brāhmaṇas among those whose verses were considered significant enough to be included in the collections that form a part of the Theravāda Canon, while the *Etadagga* list has even a larger (43.9) percentage of monastic leaders. Among the 13 nuns cited for their leadership and their qualities of intelligence, learning, and rigorous training and practice, only two were Brāhmaṇas, while four were Khattiyas and seven belonged to the *gahapati* class. The *Mahāpadāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* gives a list of six Buddhas who preceded Gotama. Of these six, the last three (50%) Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana and Kassapa, were born as Brāhmaṇas.[1] A random check of castes ascribed to Bodhisattas in the *Jātakas* reveals that the Future Buddha in these stories was born as a Brāhmaṇa 31 times. From these facts and figures Gokhale concludes that "the accomodation between the Brāhmaṇas and the Early Buddhists far outweighed rivalry, antipathy or hostility between the two"[2] and that "the relationship between Early Buddhism and the Brāhmaṇas was characterized by an acceptance of the prestige of the latter by the former."[3]

The analysis of Gokhale is impressive, but the conclusions which he has drawn are not necessarily correct. In this connection we would like to point out that out of the four categories of the Brāhmaṇas of the Buddhist age, the first (that is, the sages of yore) are irrelevant from the point of view of the Buddhist attitude towards the Brāhmaṇas and the last (that is the Brāhmaṇa Parivrājakas) were ideologically nearer to the samaṇas. In the orthodox society the influential sections of the Brāhmaṇas were those of the purohitas, Mahāsālas, Brāhmaṇa ministers and officers and according to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Gokhale himself when the early Buddhists criticised the Brāhmaṇa class, the object of their criticism were precisely these sections. Secondly, it may be noted that the analysis of Gokhale merely proves that the attitude of the Brāhmaṇas was liberal and tolerant towards the Buddhist movement; it does not prove that the Buddhists had no antipathy towards the Brāhmaṇas.[1]

Buddha's Attitude Towards Women

Let us now take up the question of the attitude of the Buddha towards women. Many historians have sought to make him a redeemer of the lot of Indian women. According to I. B. Horner, "In the pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was on the whole low and without honour. During the Buddhist epoch there was a change. Women came to enjoy more equality and greater respect and authority than ever hitherto accorded to them." Horner gives the credit for this supposed change to the Buddha for he "gave the Dhamma to both (men and women)." "It was impossible," she argues, "for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddhist teachings, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of women's powers of devotion, self-sacrifice, courage and devotion." "Under Buddhism, more than ever before, she was an individual in command of her own life until the dissolution of the body, and less of a chattel, to be only respected if she lived through and on a man. The old complete dependence, in which the will never functioned but to obey, was gradually vanishing."[2] According to another Buddhist historian "Buddhism along with Jainism but unlike

[1]How the Buddhists tried to bring the Brāhmaṇas into disrepute even in later ages is proved by a story of the *Jātakamālā*. A Brāhmaṇa teacher, it narrates, wishing to test the morals of his disciples urged them to relieve him of poverty by theft. He argued that theft is the approved mode of livelihood for Brāhmaṇas in times of distress, and poverty is the extreme distress in this world. Therefore it is no sin for them to enjoy the wealth of others. While the other disciples of the Brāhmaṇa teacher agreed to carry out his advice, the Bodhisattva alone respectfully, but firmly, rejected it. He replied that it is better to behold the opulence of manners of one's enemies with alms-bowl in hand than to bend one's mind to the murder of righteousness. The story ends by stating that the teacher warmly commended the Bodhisattva for his attitude. It is evident that the *Jātakamālā*'s reference to the arguments in favour of the doctrine of Brāhmanical privileges in this story is only a caricature of the same, meant to bring them into disrepute.

[2]Horner, I. B., *Women under Primitive Buddhism*, 1975, p. 1 f.

Brāhmaṇism gave equal opportunity in religious culture to women."[1] According to Ambedkar also the Buddha was an upholder of the doctrine of the equality of sexes.[2] According to P. Lakshmi Narasu, "man and woman are placed by the Buddha on the same footing."[3] But the entire approach of Horner and the like is vitiated by their *a priori* assumption that the condition of the Indian women in the pre-Buddhist period was on the whole low and without honour and that it improved to a considerable degree because of the impact of Buddhism. But the first part of this assumption is not only unproved, it is decidedly against the well-known facts of history. As A. S. Altekar[4] has shown, before c. 500 B.C. the position of Indian women was comparatively better as compared to what it became in subsequent centuries. He has shown that down to c. 500 B.C. the custom of *satī* and child-marriage did not exist to embitter the lot of woman; she was properly educated and given the same religious privileges as man; she could have a voice in the settlement of her marriage and occupy an honoured position in the household, could move freely in family and society and take an intelligent part in public affairs and take to a career if urged by inclination or necessity. The position of women deteriorated in the post-500 B.C. period because of the growth of slavery which rendered them unproductive members of society, the entry of non-Aryan females in the Aryan households and decline of the cult of sacrifice which made their *upanayana* unobligatory leading to a decline in their education. Thus chronologically speaking the position of women in India with the advent of Buddhism became worse, not better, as compared to their position in the pre-Buddhist period (though no causal relationship between the two phenomena is suggested here).

But was the attitude of the Buddha at all more sympathetic to women than the attitude of other contemporary leaders and thinkers? Most likely not. As is well-known, the Buddha was not at all in favour of admitting women as nuns in his Church, and agreed to do so most reluctantly only after the repeated requests of his foster-mother and aunt Mahāprajāpati were supported by Ānanda and that too after laying down eight special rules for their admission which were, to say the least, highly insulting for them. Briefly, these

[1]Joshi, L. M., *Studies in Buddhist Culture*, p. 368.
[2]*Op. cit.*
[3]Narasu, P. Lakhsmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, p. 122.
[4]Altekar, A. S., *Position of Women in Ancient India*, p. 343; 440 ff.

rules were[1]: (1) A nun, even of a hundred years standing, must make salutation to and bow down before a monk if only just initiated. In other words a monk of whatever standing was always to be saluted by a nun of whatever standing. (2) A nun must not spend the rainy season in a district in which there was no monk. (3) Every fortnight a nun must know from the monks the date of uposathā and the day fixed for monk's address (*ovāda*) to nuns. (4) A nun must perform pavāraṇā first in the bhikkhu saṅgha and then in the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha. (5) A nun must take a *manatta* discipline first from monks and then from nuns. (6) A nun, trained in six pachittiya rules of Bhikkhuṇī Pātimokkha should seek upasampadā from both the saṅghas. (7) On no pretext a nun was to revile or abuse a bhikshu. (8) A nun must not admonish a monk and she must not prescribe any date for *uposathā* or *pavāraṇā* for monks; the official admonition of the nuns by monks, however, was not forbidden. *All these rules were never to be transgressed.*

Some of these rules were obviously framed from the point of view of the security of the nuns (for example, rule no. 2); but others were not framed with the same purpose in view. From these rules it is obvious that the Buddha subscribed to the notion of innate superiority of male over female. He apparently believed that the nuns should not be independent of monks; they were ever to remain dependent upon them for the performance of most of their ceremonies and for the authorisation of them all. The first and the last two rules, specially the first, were obviously made to make the nuns always remember that they were inherently inferior to monks because of their sex. One can understand the regulation that no one should abuse the others, but invidious discrimination made in respect of women is inexplicable. Why should a senior nun be not entitled to rebuke a junior monk in his failings? When Mahāprajāpati Gotamī requested the Buddha to apply the rule of seniority for monks and nuns according to their relative status and not according to their sex, he is reported to have said : "This is impossible Ānanda, and unallowable that I should so order . . . you are not, *bhikkhus*, to bow down before women, . . . or to perform towards them these duties that are proper (from an inferior to a superior)." Apparently what the Buddha feared most was that the nuns might claim for

[1]Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 119 f.; Chakrabortty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 221.

themselves equality with if not superiority over monks while he himself apparently believed in the inferiority of the fair sex.

From several other facts Buddha's attitude towards women becomes clearer. Firstly, it is to be noted that it was a pachittiya offence for a nun to ordain a girl who had not the consent of her parents or husband. But in the case of males, only the consent of parents was sought, not that of the wife. Mention is frequently made of women who tried successfully, or unsuccessfully, to obtain their husband's permission.[1] Secondly, Buddha's opinion about women is reflected in the *Chullavagga* wherein he says: "If, Ānanda, women had not received permission to go out from the household life and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, then would the pure religion have lasted long; the good law would have stood fast for a thousand years. But since, Ānanda, women have now received that permission, the pure religion will not now last so long . . . will stand for only 500 years."[2] Once he is known to have said, "He feels no pleasure when she comes, no sorrow when she goes; him I call a true Brāhmaṇa, released from passions."[3]

It can hardly be denied that the Buddha was always sympathetic, courteous and helpful to his women contemporaries.[4] But, strangely, throughout the *Vinaya* the bhikkhus are represented as bringing their questions and difficulties directly to him, while the nuns are always represented as complaining through the medium of the bhikkhus; only Mahāprajāpati is said to have approached him directly probably on account of her kinship with him and her long standing in the saṅgha. The attitude of the Buddha percolated into the saṅgha.[5] It is best exemplified by an incident which took place after his death. It is reported that at the Council of Rājagṛha held during the first rainy season after the Nirvāṇa, an accusation was brought against Ānanda for having first let women mourners defile the body of the Buddha with their tears.[6] It may be regarded as an indication of the Buddhistic attitude towards women during the age of the Buddha himself.

[1]Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 149 ff.
[2]*Chullavagga*, X; Chakrabortty, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 301 ff.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 308 f.
[6]*Ibid.*, p. 300.

According to Horner the association of the large number of educated women with early Buddhism proves what Buddha had done for the emancipation of the weaker sex. But it may reasonably be argued that the women of the age of the Buddha were not the product of Buddhism; they were born and brought up in the Brāhmaṇical society; it is another matter that they accepted the teachings of a great thinker of their age. Therefore the academic and intellectual standard of the Buddhist ladies of the age of the Buddha himself—nuns and lay-women both—cannot be regarded as the achievement of the Buddha or early Buddhism. The contribution of Buddhism for the betterment of the lot of women should be judged by its impact on them in the post-Buddha centuries. But for that evidence is extremely meagre. It is true that the existence of bhikkhuṇīs is mentioned in the schism edict of Aśoka, the Ceylonese Chronicles (which refer to the missionary activity of Saṅghamitrā) and some post-Aśokan inscriptions. But it is also a fact that "compared with the number of vihāras for monks, the nunneries were few .. no nunnery is heard from the enormous inscriptions of Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. Hence we may infer that the number and position of nuns were fast declining about the Kuṣāṇa period."[1]

Here it may be mentioned that the attitude of the Buddha towards women was not in any way better as compared with other religious sects. For example the Śvetāmbara Jainas recognised the right of women for emancipation and organised their own nunneries. Even in the days of Pārśva, and even earlier, the Jainas had their own order of nuns who numbered in thousands. Therefore what the Buddha did in the late sixth century B.C. was not something 'revolutionary'; it had been done by Pārśva in the 8th century B.C. and was being done by several contemporaries of the Buddha in c. 500 B.C. And, significantly, his contemporaries like Mahāvīra did not raise any objection against admitting women into their sanghas. As regards Brāhmaṇism, it should be remembered that it was not a missionary religion; hence it had no need to organise orders of missionary monks and nuns. Therefore, one cannot and should not expect the existence of Brāhmaṇical nunneries. If one maintains that Brāhmaṇical society gave equal religious opportunity to women, he can only be expected to show that in the early Vedic society women could participate in the performance of sacrifices and in the

[1]Chakraborty, H., *op. cit.*, p. 222.

Upanishadic age in the cultivation of Brahmavidyā. And such was actually the case. In the Vedic religion performance of sacrifices depended upon the actual and equal participation in it by the wife of the householder. That is why the *upanayana* of girls used to take place as regularly as that of the boys. Consequently they were given equal training in the Vedic lore also. In the Upanishadic age, ladies of the Brāhmaṇical society took active interest in the cultivation of Brahmavidyā. For example, Yājñavalkya's wife Maitreyī was more interested in finding out the way to immortality than in setting new fashions in dress and ornaments. In the philosophical tournament held under the auspices of Janaka, the lady philosopher Gārgī asked extremely abstruse questions. Ātreyī, a lady student of Vedānta, studied under sages Vālmīki and Agastya. In the Vedic society women like Sulabhā and Gārgī Vachaknavī even adopted homeless life. When the Buddha left home and proceeded in search of Truth, he was invited by two Brāhmaṇa female hermits to stay in their hermitages.[1] Pāṇini and Baudhāyana refer to Brāhmaṇical nuns and Kauṭilya uses the term *parivrājaka* in the sense of a nun.

In early Buddhism women were generally regarded as extremely unreliable, faithless and no better than household possessions.[2] In a number of references the early Buddhist texts class them with inanimate objects and cows and horses.[3] In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha advises Ānanda not to see women; and if it becomes necessary to see them, not to speak with them; and if it becomes necessary to speak with them, then to keep wide awake.[4] In the *Milinda Pañho* the Buddha is reported to have said that "with opportunity and secrecy and the right wooer all women will go wrong. Aye, failing with others, with a cripple even."[5] In the *Chullavagga* the Buddha opines that "unfathomably deep . . . is the character of women. They are like robbers with many artifices,

[1]Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 87.

[2]While advocating the cult of asceticism in his *Saundarananda* (VIII.31.36), Aśvaghosha holds women as the greatest obstacle in the path of virtue. He makes the Buddha pronounce that women are like envenomed creepers, like unsheathed swords and like dens of horrible reptiles. According to him an indignant serpent can be appeased but the heart of a woman cannot be subdued. It may also be noted that in early Mahāyāna female Bodhisattvas were extremely rare (Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 78.).

[3]Indra, *The Status of Women in Ancient India*, p. 222 f.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 223 f.

[5]*Ibid.*

with whom truth is hard to find, to whom lie is like the truth, a truth is like a lie. No heed should be paid to either their likes or their dislikes."[1]

Some historians have made an attempt to differentiate the religious and social aspects of Buddha's attitude to women. It has been urged that though from the standpoint of religion, which demanded high moral discipline on the part of a monk, the Buddha appears to be anti-women, but in social aspect, he did not teach difference between man and woman.[2] But, as seen above, it is not true. The Buddha had no particular respect for women as members of society. Here it may be noted that he did not concern himself with the problem of the lay-women at all. Examples can be cited to prove that he cherished the ideal of the subservience of wife. Once he described seven kinds of wives to Sujātā, the unruly daughter-in-law of Anāthapiṇḍika. Four of these categories he described as virtuous. These are respectively of those wives who act as mother, sister, companion or slave; they go to heaven. The three kinds of non-virtuous wives behave like slayer, robber or mistress: they go to hell. Significantly, as a result of his teachings Sujātā decided to become a slave-like wife.[3]

Buddha's Attitude to Slavery and other Social Problems

Whether or not early Buddhism served as a factor of social change, may be seen in its attitude towards slavery also. In the age of the Buddha slavery was a well established institution. The Buddhist literature itself is full of references to the pitiable condition of slaves and slave-girls.[4] The Buddha was himself served by slaves; for the existence of slavery in the Śākyan society is proved by the famous example of Vāsabhakhattiyā, the slave-girl, who was treacherously married to Prasenajit. Further, the Buddha must have seen innumerable slaves with his affluent and royal lay-devotees such as Anāthapiṇḍika, Bimbisāra, Prasenajit, etc. The question is: as a 'social revolutionary' what did he do for the eradication of this evil institution? The answer is: 'precious nothing.' He was certainly moved by their pitiable condition and once he suggested a code of conduct

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[2] Madhu Sen, in *Studies in Religion and Change*, pp. 101–10.

[3] *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, IV, p. 92 f., quoted *ibid.*

[4] Cf. Sinha, B. P., 'Early Indian Buddhism as a Factor of Social Change', *Studies in Religion and Change*, p. 83 f.

for the slaves and their masters. But the proposed code only suggested that (a) the slaves should remain satisfied with what they had got; (b) they should work for the praise and fame of their master; and (c) the masters should behave with the slaves kindly. In brief, his code merely exhorted the masters to be merciful to their slaves.[1] Aśoka shows the same attitude in his edicts. Thus it is apparent that the early Buddhism did not appreciate the spirit of resentment among slaves, what to talk of rebellion. The entire *Tripiṭaka* is free from any suggestion for their betterment. Rather the Buddha is known to have consoled them with the argument that their condition was the result of their past actions and assured them the status of god if they suffered their lot willingly.[2]

The Buddha apparently did not see any 'suffering' in slavery—and for that matter in any evil social institution. It is significant that none of the spectacles which led him to adopt the life of homelessness (viz., sickness, old age and death) was 'social' in nature; all these three represent 'individual' suffering. Actually his concept of suffering was not even individual; he was motivated by 'spiritual' suffering, and sickness, old age and death were its symbolic representation. Similarly, his concept of *bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya* was not social in nature; the *hita* of others which he sought to achieve was spiritual or ethical, not social. Buddhism emerged in a particular social environment in which the very existence of man was regarded as sorrowful. Dukkhavāda in those days was as widely accepted a doctrine as socialism is today. The Buddha was a great thinker, but he was also a child of his age; he was, therefore, more concerned with the ethical betterment of his followers and not in the social problems of the day (such as position of women, slavery and condition of the low castes). His influence on the contemporary social order, if any, was only accidental, not intentional. Therefore, the question of his being a 'social revolutionary' should not in the first place be raised at all.

Attitude towards Economic Activities

In early Buddhism monks and nuns refrained from engaging in economic activities. They were indeed forbidden any kind of economic activity. Possession of property by individual monks and nuns was forbidden. Even clothes, food and medicines could not be held in quantities more than what could meet with immediate needs. Also, work of any kind which did not coincide with the conditions of being

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

a monk was forbidden. However, for the upāsaka who remained in the world no restrictions on economic activities existed. Buddhism did not despise the rich. On the contrary, wealth was esteemed and its waste was regarded as deplorable. Accumulation of wealth was regarded as a laudable activity. *But riches should not remain immobilized,* nor should they be dissipated on pleasures. Wealth should be used to help others. It makes sense only when it is used for religious ends, that is, to serve the needs of one's neighbours and those of the monks after having served one's own needs.

Buddhism acknowledged all vocations except trade in weapons, living beings, meat, liquors and poisons. The vocations which cause killing were forbidden. Thus Buddhism introduced limitations on the practice of vocations, but they arise from the incompatibility of some vocations with the principles of religion. While not placing limitations on property, to some extent early Buddhism hindered the formation of capital because according to its tenets wealth should be turned to religious ends. Further, the exaltation of the life of monks and the insistence on the transitoriness of earthly life, made economic goods appear of little value in the eyes of the faithful.

In Mahāyāna also, monks did not engage in any economic activities which were denounced by them. However, some Mahāyānists believed that worldly economic life also should be of religious significance. Activities for helping others by giving something in any way to them was encouraged. Poverty should be driven away. As in early Buddhism not all vocations were admitted as proper. Cattle-raising and dealing of slaves and wine were forbidden.

Early Buddhism occupied itself little with the problem of production, whereas in Mahāyāna the king was expected to increase production, and take care of the economic necessities of the country specially in case of calamity. Great emphasis was laid on the problem of taxation. The tribute was a service, exacted from the subjects by the king as a private person. The king could dispose of the fruits of taxation at will. Thus, taxation was regarded by people as a theft that the king commits to the disadvantage of his people. Buddhists therefore asserted that taxes should be as low as possible. They placed the limit of the tax at a sixth of production. Low taxes stimulate production, which is one of the king's duties. The king should distribute his *kośa* to the needy. This could increase the income of the king. In this way, a concept of redistributive finance was sought to be introduced.

Chapter 16

BUDDHIST POLITICAL THOUGHT

Place of Political Science in the Buddhist Scheme of Knowledge

The contribution of Buddhism to Indian political thought has been quite significant. In early Buddhism political science was called Khattavijjā, 'the science of the Kshatriyas'. In some texts it is called Daṇḍanīti or Rājaśāstra or Nītiśāstra. In the *Dīgha Nikāya* it belongs to the group of law arts (*tirachchhāṇa vijjā*) and is called a wrongful occupation (*michchhājīva*). In a Jātaka story Khattavijjā involves the teaching that one might gain his end even by killing one's parents and is denounced by a pious ascetic as sinful. In another Jātaka story a king explains the mystical sayings of the Kshatriyas (*Khattiya-māyā*) to mean that one may rescue his distressed self by any means, gentle or severe and parctise righteousness afterwards. In a third Jātake story a virtuous prince neglects the Khattadhamma as being contrary to morality and returns to a man-eater (so that the monster may eat him) to fulfil his plighted words in accordance with the astral lore (*Nakkhata dhamma*). Evidently in these stories, *Khatta-vijjā* has been conceived as a dismal science based upon the creed of unbridled selfishness and as the very antithesis of ethics.[1] This view is repeated in later Buddhist texts. Daṇḍanīti, says a text of the lost *Jñānavaipulya Sūtra*, belongs to a list of sciences (*śāstras*) that are unfruitful and are opposed to salvation and that ought to be eschewed by the person who wants to be established in 'the Bodhisattvayāna'. According to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* the Bodhisattvas should be discreet in their spheres of movement in the sense that they must not serve or attend upon or join the presence of kings, princes and the rājapurushas.[2] In the *Buddhacharita* of Aśvaghosha the son of the royal chaplain, who is well-versed in Nītiśāstra seeks in vain to tempt Gautama Siddhārtha to dalliance with women. From this it follows that luring princes to sensual indulgence was not regarded as against the principles of Nītiśāstra. In the same work Siddhārtha

[1]Ghoshal, U. N., *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, p. 65–6.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 261 f.

Gautama is made to say that royalty is the abode of delusion. It involves the intoxication of power as well as obstruction of righteousness by causing the oppression of others. He points out the gulf separating the *dharma* of salvation with its emphasis upon quietude (*śama*) and the *dharma* of kings with its emphasis upon punishment (*daṇḍa*), and he ends by indicating their essential incompatibility in the following emphatic words: 'If a king delights in quietude, his kingdom collapses; if his mind turns towards his kingdom, quietude is ruined; for quietude and security are incompatible like the union of water which is cold with fire which is hot.'[1] In the various stories of his *Jātakamālā*, Āryaśūra illustrates the antagonism between Politics and Ethics. He seems to believe that "statecraft is dominated by the ends of Wealth and Pleasure instead of Virtue, and that in particular it is based upon a creed of merciless and shameless exploitation of the subjects by the ruler in his own interest."[2] The roots of this conflict between Politics and Ethics, Ghoshal observes, go back "to the fundamental difference between the standards of the two sets of thought. For while the *Arthaśāstra* teachers were inspired by their avowed end of ensuring the security and prosperity of the State to condone, if not to justify, breaches of morality in its interest, Buddhism with its stern and unbending code of ethics stood for the unqualified supremacy of the moral law over governmental affairs."[3]

Social Contract Theory of the Origin of State and Kingship

The origin of state was explained by early Buddhists just in the same way as in the western theory of social contract. They did not claim divine right for kings, but insisted that the first king was chosen by men. As noted above in the discussion on Buddhist social philosophy, the *Aggañña Suttanta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* propounds the theory that in the original state of nature beings lived in a condition of god-like perfection. The institution of kingship came into existence when, as a result of the origin of property, the evils of theft, censure, lying and violence afflicted the human society. It is said that afflicted by these evils the beings gathered together and elected the ablest and handsomest individual among them as king who should be wrathful when indignation is right, should censure that which should rightly be censured and should banish him who

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 261.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 341.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

deserves to be banished. In return the beings agreed to give him a portion of their rice. He was called by the titles *Mahāsammata* ('one who is chosen by the multitude'), *Khattiya* ('one who is lord of the fields') and *Rājā* ('one who gratifies the others in accordance with *dhamma*').[1] The story is repeated with minor changes in the *Mahāvastu*, in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins,[2] the *Abhidharma kosha* of Vasubandhu and the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosha.[3]

The Buddhists thus propounded the theory of social contract as was done by some political thinkers in the West, through which men designated one of themselves as head of the society in order to obtain social tranquility and welfare. This duty was then transmitted from father to son. This is the origin of dynasties of kings. People pay homage to the king by paying him tribute; and the king, on his part, has the obligation to protect the people to the point of reimbursing one who has been robbed, when he can not make the thief do so. In the *Mahābhārata* there is found a legend similar to that of the Buddhist social contract, except that men agree to ask God for a king, who therefore is such by divine right.[4] In the Buddhist theory the role of the king is confined to the maintenance of public order and that of the people to his support. However, the theory is important in as much as it justifies the office of the king in the interest of the institution of property and public security. Further, it propounds the view that the origin of kingship was the result of bilateral contract which imposed upon the ruler the duty of punishing the wrong-doers in return for payment of the customary dues.

In the Jātakas one finds a simpler theory of the origin of kingship. In some Jātaka stories the selection of perfect man as king by the people is followed by the selection of the lion, the monster fish, and golden goose as king by the quadrupeds, fishes and birds respectively. However, "these stories by omitting all reference to the Governmental Compact between the original ruler and the community fall short of the Buddhist canonical theory of the origin of kingship, although the first and the fullest extract refers to the original State of Nature which was synonymous with anarchy and which led to the institution of kingship by popular election."[5]

[1]Ghoshal, U. N., *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, p. 63.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 258 ff.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 337 f.
[4]Nakamura, Hajime, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987, p. 81.
[5]Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 66 f.

Divinity of Kings

The Pali canonical texts contain scattered notices pointing to the high social and political status of the king. These notices, however, have no relation with the theory of the origin of kingship. A king, we read in the *Sutta Nipāta*, is the first among men and the chief of men. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* we are told that the king is the sign or symbol (*paññāṇam*) of the state (*raṭṭha*). According to the *Chulla Niddesa* the gods are of three grades, namely, those by human convention or public opinion (*sammutideva*), those by purity (*visuddhideva*), and those by birth (*upapattideva*). While the second order consists of saints (Arahats and Buddhas) and the third of gods by birth (or rebirth), the first and the lowest class comprises the king, the queen and the princes. The Aryan disciple with riches justly obtained, says the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, makes five oblations (*bali*), namely, that to kin, to guests, to the departed spirits, to kings, and to gods (*deva*). The *Saṁyutta Nikāya* says that four persons or objects, namely, the king, the snake, fire and the monk, though youthful, must not be disregarded or despised. Thus the Buddists conceived the king as occupying the highest social and political status. "Further, they place the king along with his family members in an inferior order of divinity even as judged by Buddhist standards. In fact the title applied to this class indicates a clumsy attempt at compromise between the canonical idea of the origin of kingship in a Governmental Compact and the popular notion of the king's divinity. Evidently as a corollary of the above ideas the authors deduce the obligation of the subjects towards their ruler in the form of a symbolical offering to the king by the householder as a part of his daily routine, a conception which is obviously a Buddhist adaptation of the well-known *Smṛiti* rule relating to the performance of the five daily sacrifices by the householders of the upper classes."[1] In the Mahāyāna work *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* at one place the gods ask Brahmā, why is it that the king "who is born of man (*manushya-sambhūta*) is styled a god and a *devaputra*, and how does the king who is born in the world of men assume the character of a god and rule over men ?" The king, Brahmā replies, being first established by the gods enters his mother's womb. Though he is born and dies in the world of men, he is sprung from the gods and so is styled *devaputra*. The thirty-three gods give their

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

portions to the king, and he is thus equipped for sonship of all the gods. This theory is evidently a Buddhist adaptation of the Brāhmaṇical doctrine of the divine origin of king out of the essence of the Lokapālas. The title *devaputra* assigned to the king, and the reference to his creation out of the particles of the thirty-three gods evidently mark the Buddhist attempt to mould the Brāhmaṇical theory for their own purpose.

Aims of the State

Early Buddhism showed a pessimistic and negative attitude towards the state and kingship. In the days of early Buddhism in fact, the kings did nothing but engage in wars among themselves, rendering the condition of the people miserable. "They hunted and made love and waged wars of aggrandisement."[1] For the Buddhists this meant a lack of clemency, and they made the kings responsible for the crimes committed by their subjects. If a man steals, it is not his fault, but that of the king, who keeps his subjects in such miserable conditions which force them to steal. In Buddhism there was a recognition of social crimes for which the rulers were held responsible. The polemic against the state of its time was very violent in early Buddhism, even going so far as to consider it a diabolical creation (just as early Christianity did, for more or less the same reasons).[2] The Buddha aimed at realizing his ideal of perfect society in the monastic order, which withdrew completely from state authority. The essential character of this society was lack of punishment by force. The guilty one had to apply to himself the penalties that had been decreed against him. The *saṅgha* was placed in many cases beyond the reach of state power. Thus Buddhism first taught its followers to keep aloof from states and kings. But later on it came to advocate the ideal of governing people with universal laws (*dharma*), motivated by compassion. The highest principle of Buddhism is that of the conservation of peace and the abolition of fighting. A pacifistic attitude was advocated by early Buddhists. Wars were abhorred, peace was striven for. The political aim of Buddhism was to protect the needy and maintain tranquility in the country. But to do this one must punish the guilty. How can this use of violence be justified ? Because it corrects the guilty one and puts

[1]Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 313.
[2]Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

him on the right way. For this reason there should be clemency in the application of penalty. Punishment should be lenient. But the king has the duty of protecting his subjects, and if attacked, he should throw back invaders. War is always a sin, but defensive war is permitted, although a pacifistic attitude should be maintained insofar as it is possible.[1]

Duties of the King to His Subjects

The king should be most diligent in administering the state. His private life, too, must be a mirror of virtue, and, above all, he is advised to stay away from sensual enjoyments with women. He should be assisted by good functionaries chosen and promoted according to merit If the king administers the state according to divine law, he will draw down on it the divine benediction, and the state will flourish. Thus he will bring about his happiness and that of his subjects, and after his death, he will enter heaven. The *Jātakas* contain some references to the authority and obligation of the kings, although these are unrelated to the canonical theory of social contract discussed above. 'A woman without a husband, a river run dry and a realm (*raṭṭha*) without a king are naked.' 'One needs a king and a warrior for protection.' 'A realm without a king cannot be protected and it cannot stand.' 'Just as the tree is the refuge of birds, so is the king the refuge of his people.' 'As the daughter-in-law is to the father-in-law, so is the king a refuge to his people.' 'Just as an aged father ought to be cared for by an able-bodied son, so too ought all the people to be protected by the king.'[2]

The *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra propounds the *Smṛti* principle that the king's paternal treatment of his subjects is a corollary of their willing submission to his political authority. In other words, protection is the ruler's moral obligation towards the ruled in return for their obedience. In the *Chatuḥśataka* of Āryadeva it is said that "pride consisting in the feeling of self and mineness should not be entertained by a good man. This, says the commentator, is an admonition particularly addressed to kings, since they are excessively swayed by such sentiments. In the following verse (IV.77) the author, addressing himself to an imaginary king, puts to him the bold and direct question : 'How can you feel pride, you who are a mere slave of the multitude (*gaṇadāsa*) fed (*bhṛita*) by the one-sixth

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] For references, vide Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

share (of the crops paid by the subjects) ?' This question, the commentator plausibly argues, is an answer to the hypothetical argument that all undertakings depend upon the king, and therefore the king's pride is justified on the ground of his possessing this right."[1] Thus with great cogency the commentator justifies the Buddhist theory of the origin of kingship and develops the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people with the king functioning as their slave or servant (*dāsa*) for wages.

Dhamma, the Essence of Kingship

"The most important contribution of the early Buddhist canonists to the store of our ancient political thought consists in their 'total' application of the principle of righteousness to the branches of the king's internal and foreign administration." In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the question is asked as to who is the king of the righteous king (*dhammikassa dhammarañño rājā*) and the answer given is that this is righteousness (*dhamma*). Several Jātaka stories describe kings who are said to have ruled in righteousness, shunned the four wrong courses of life (*agatigamana*) (comprising excitement, malice, delusion and fear), practised the ten royal duties (*rājadhamma*) (namely, alms-giving, morality, liberality, straightforwardness, refraining from anger and from injury, forbearance and refraining from opposition), won over the people by the four elements of popularity (*saṅgahavatthu*) (namely, liberality, affability, beneficent rule and impartiality) and were zealous in the observance of the fast-day and keeping the ten items of good behaviour (*sīla*), namely, abstinence from taking life, from taking what is not given to one, from adultery, from telling lies, from slander, from harsh speech, from frivolous talks, from covetousness, from malevolence, and from heretical views.[2] "How a king's observance of *dhamma* instead of its reverse benefits himself is told in a few stories. Thus we learn how a king who conquered wrath with mildness and badness with goodness was adjudged superior to another who met the good with goodness and the bad with badness, and how kings allowed themselves to be captured and ill-treated by neighbouring kings only to gain back their freedom and their kingdom through their inherent goodness."[3] In several Jātaka stories we are told that *dhamma* is the essence of kingship as well as the king's best policy. The authors of these

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 69 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*

stories clarify the principles and policies of government involved in the above dictum. The king, it is explained, should avoid specified vices and practise specified virtues, the latter being identified in some instances with the precepts incumbent upon the Buddhist lay-disciple. The king, we are further told, should apply himself to the promotion of universal happiness of his subjects so as to extend its benefit down to the dumb creation. According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, when kings become unrighteous their officers (*rājayuttas*) also become unrighteous. "This being so the Brāhmaṇas and the mass of ordinary freemen (*gahapatis*), the townsfolk and the villagers in their turn become unrighteous; this being so the sun and the moon, the stars and the constellations go wrong in their courses; days and nights, months, seasons, and years are out of joint; the winds blow wrong; the *devas* being annoyed do not bestow sufficient rain. This being so, the crops ripen in the wrong season and consequently men are short-lived, ill-favoured, weak and sickly. Conversely, when kings become righteous, all the reverse consequences follow."[1] Thus the king through his attitude towards righteousness shapes by a regular chain of causation not only the moral stature of his subjects but also the movements of heavenly bodies and the succession of time as well as the operation of the climatic factors governing the agricultural production, and finally the physical type of the people. Political righteousness, as thus conceived, rises almost to the level of a cosmic principle of creation.[2] In the *Suvarṇaprābhāsa sūtra* we read that the king is divinely ordained instrument for the fulfilment of *dhamma*. This is made to supplement the old familiar principle that *dhamma* is the essence of kingship and is in fact the king's foremost obligation. Its author explains after the older pattern the profound repercussion of the king's attitude towards *dhamma* upon his own fortunes and tells us that the violation of righteousness by king plunges his people into wickedness and strife, disturbs the atmospheric, the climatic and the agricultural processes shaping man's physical existence, disturbs the movements of heavenly bodies and produces inauspicious portents, visits the people with human and providential calamities, and last but not the least, provokes the gods to disown the king. Conversely, the king's observance of *dhamma* is attended with all the reverse consequences. The rule of *dhamma* imposes upon the king the obligation of promoting virtue

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 72 f.

and preventing sin among his subjects, of observing strict impartiality towards them, and lastly and above all, of the punishment of wrongdoers.[1]

Conception of Chakkavattī Dhammiko Dhammarāja

The early Buddhist thinkers give us a highly idealistic picture of a Righteous World-Ruler (Chakkavattī Dhammiko Dhammarāja). Such a ruler is credited with a conventional list of 'seven jewels' (or treasures) constituting his imperial regalia. The list consists of the wheel, the elephant, the horse, a woman, the treasurer and the adviser. It is also claimed that he as well as his eldest son possess five great qualities : they know wealth, virtue, measure, time and the assembled men. In the stock description of the chakravarttī's characteristics, we are told that he is called the Emperor over the four quarters of the earth, righteous in himself, ruling righteously, triumphant abroad, enforcing law and order at home, possessing 'the seven jewels.' The thirtieth *sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, entitled the *Lakkhaṇa Suttanta* sets forth thirty-two *lakshaṇas* of a mahāpurusha (great man). It begins by saying that to a mahāpurusha possessed of these marks, only two careers are open. If he forsakes the worldly life, he becomes an Arhat, a Samyaksambuddha. But if he chooses to live in the world and become a householder, he becomes *Rājā ... chakkavattī dhammiko dhammarāja chāturanto vijitāvī .... So imaṁ pathavīṁ sāgara-pariyantaṁ adaṇḍena asatthena dhammena abhivijīya ajjhāvasati*, "a King, Turner of the wheel, the Righteous One, Ruler of Righteousness, Lord of the four quarters, Conqueror ... Having conquered this earth to its ocean bounds, not by the chastising rod, not by the sword, but by righteousness (*dhamma*), he lives supreme over it."[2] Thus a Chakkavattī ruler, it is held, is the temporal counterpart of the Buddha resembling him not only in his outward bodily form (the so-called thirty-two bodily signs of the superman) and the extraordinary incidents of his birth, death, cremation and commemoration, but also in their jointly unique role as universal benefactors. As the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* puts it, the fully enlightened Tathāgata (Buddha) and the *Chakkavattī* king are two persons who are born for the happiness of many folk and who are both extraordinary.[3] A number of such Chakravartī

[1]*Ibid.*
[2]Bhandarkar, *Aśoka*, p. 203.
[3]Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

Dharmarājas, according to the Buddhists, had ruled on the earth in the days of yore. According to the *Chakkavatti Sīhanāda sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, in course of time kings arose who did not stick to the Aryan rule of conduct, and the result was that all kinds of immorality sprang up, shortening more and more the span of human life. The worst has not yet come. The degradation and miseries that will confront men during this state of things have been graphically described. When the worst is once reached, things will take a better turn and continue improving till another Chakravartti Dharmarāja will come into existence. The first of these Chakravarttis in the age long past was Daḷhanemi. He reigned many thousand years, till the Celestial Wheel shone over his palace. When, however, it slipped down from its place, he retired to a forest, placing his eldest son on the throne. But on the seventh day after the royal hermit left, the Wheel completely disappeared. Thereupon the son hastened to the father and informed him of what had happened.[1] The royal hermit observed that the Celestial Wheel was not his paternal heritage (*pettikam dāyajjam*), but it might manifest itself to him if he observed the Aryan duty of a *Chakkavatti* (*ariyam cakkavatti-vattam*). 'Thou should', explained the sage, 'provide right watch, ward and protection for thy own folk (*antejana*), for the army, for the nobles, for vassals, for Brāhmaṇas and householders, for town and country-folk (*negama-janapadesu*), for Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas and for beasts and birds. Throughout thy kingdom, let no wrong-doing prevail. And whosoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given. Should Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas ask thee (*paripuchchheyāsi*) for the proper line of action, thou should deter them from evil and bid them take up what is good.' The son of Daḷhanemi followed his father's advice and the Celestial Wheel, which makes a king Chakravartti, revealed itself. He followed the progress of the Wheel, which first went to the east and then to the south, west and north, and the conquered enemy kings in each of these regions said : "Teach us, O mighty king." The Chakravartti preached to them, saying : "Ye shall slay no living thing. Ye shall not take that which has not been given, ye shall not act wrongly touching bodily desires, ye shall speak no lie, ye shall drink no maddening drink." When a later king of Daḷhanemi's line preferred to govern his people according to his own will, they failed to

[1]Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

prosper as they had done under former kings observant of the ways of a *Chakkavattī*. Even when he was reminded of his duty by his ministers and courtiers the king simply provided watch and ward and protection for his people, but failed to give alms to the destitute. This led to poverty of the people and the progressive deterioration of their morals and shortening of their lives. At length the very extremity of the evil led the people on their own initiative to increase their performance of good deeds which resulted in the lengthening of their lives.[1] Among the four gifts (*iddhis*) of Mahāsudassana was, we are told, that he was popular with the Brāhmaṇas and the householders just as a father is near and dear to his own sons, while conversely the Brāhmaṇas and the householders were near and dear to him just as his sons are near and dear to a father.

Thus in Buddhist thought a Chakravarttī is a supreme ruler of the earth, not by physical might but by moral and spiritual power; and this is just what is meant by the *Lakkhaṇa Suttanta* when it says that a mahāpurusha 'lives supreme over the earth, conquering it, not by the chastising rod or the sword, but by Dhamma.' Evidently he becomes a Chakravarttī, not by *vijaya,* but by *dhamma-vijaya.* According to D. R. Bhandarkar, there can hardly be any doubt that Aśoka took his cue for *dhamma-vijaya* from some such Buddhist Suttas. "This alone can explain why his charities were not confined merely to the human beings but extended to the beast, nay even to the birds, in fact, to the whole creature world, as we have just seen. This further explains why those activities were similarly not restricted to his own subjects only, but extended also to those of the independent kingdoms, in fact, to the whole human race; and those, again, not merely for their material comfort but also spiritual elevation. These last kingdoms were conquered by him, not by war or brute force, but by Dhamma or soul force. In other words, Aśoka aspired to become a Chakravartī Dhārmika Dharmarāja. From Rock Edict XIII it appears that Aśoka believed that he had attained to this lofty position through *dhaṃma-vijaya.* That he did not perhaps over-rate himself may be seen from the fact that the Divyāvadāna actually styles him *Chaturbhāga-chakravartī Dhārmiko Dharmarājo.*"[2] Some other scholars, such as Romila Thapar, however, differ on the point and suggest that the Buddhist concept of Chakkavattī

[1]Ghoshal, *op. cit.*
[2]Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 206–7.

Dhammika Dhammarāja was itself the result of the example set by Aśoka.[1]

Buddhist Attitude to the Gaṇa Polity

In the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. several monarchical states, notably Kosala and Magadha, were expanding at the expense of the *gaṇa* states. The Buddhist *Saṅgha* maintained cordial relations with both sides. Nevertheless the Buddha (who was born in a gaṇa state) and his early followers undoubtedly sympathized strongly with the republics. The Buddhist Order was itself organized on the republican principles. An episode from the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* will illustrate the Buddhist attitude to the *gaṇa* states:

At one time the Buddha was living at Rājagaha on the Gijjhakūṭa mountain. At that time Ajātasattu desired to attack the Vajjians. He sent his Brāhmaṇa minister Vassakāra with instructions to inform the Buddha of his intention and listen very carefully to the predictions of the Buddha as to the success of the campaign. When Vassakāra spoke to the Buddha, Ānanda was standing behind the latter. The Buddha then addressed Ānanda: 'Have you heard, Ānanda, whether the Vajjians hold their assembly frequently, and cultivate the assembly; whether they assemble and part in unity (unanimity) and carry out the Confederacy's business in unity; whether they adhere to their ancient constitution (or customs); whether they honour their elders and listen to their advice; whether they prevent the forcible abduction of women and girls of the clans; whether they honour the *chetiyas* in their territory with offerings and rites as of old; whether they protect and support the arhats among them and those who may enter their territory.' After hearing the answer of Ānanda to each of his question, which were all in affirmative, the Buddha remarked that so long the Vajjians fulfilled these conditions they will continue to prosper and not decay. From this Vassakāra concluded that Ajātasattu will not be able to defeat the Vajjians except by intrigue and breaking up their alliance. He then hurriedly excused himself and presumably reported back to Ajātasattu.

As pointed out by Ghoshal, here the Buddha has given us a comprehensive list of the qualifications of the citizens of a gaṇa state. These comprise the virtues of public spirit (exemplified by full and frequent attendance of the members at the popular assembly

[1]Thapar, Romila, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 146.

and their mutual harmony), a wise conservatism (illustrated by loyalty to the ancient traditions), moral rectitude and discipline (shown by respect for the elders and non-violence towards women of other clans), and piety (illustrated by respect for the shrines and protection of the saints). While giving emphasis on the mutual harmony he had evidently in view the essential weakness of republican constitutions, namely, their proneness to internal dissensions.[1]

[1]Ghoshal, *op. cit.*

Chapter 17

BUDDHIST HISTORIOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Factors in the Rise of Buddhist Historiography

Ahistorical Spirit of Early Buddhism

The basic spirit of early Buddhism was asocial and its attitude ahistorical. At one place in the *Dīgha Nikāya* the Buddha expresses his aversion to indulgence in 'low talk' (*tirachchhāna kathā*) in which he includes tales of kings and nobles, wars and heroes, cities and countryside, beautiful maidens and bandits etc. which are commonly regarded as the material out which history is constructed. He opines that a good monk does not waste time in learning or listening to ballads and heroic poetry and in the *Aṭṭhasālinī* Buddhaghosha cites the *Bhāratayuddha* (that is, the *Mahābhārata*) and the *Sītāharaṇa* (that is, the *Rāmāyaṇa*) as the eminent examples of such compositions.[1] This aversion of early Buddhism for history resulted from its philosophy of life which regarded existence as without any substance, transitory like a fleeting bubble, a passing mirage. The human body was looked upon as of no consequence, for on death it lies like a cast away log of wood. The traditional account of the four signs seen by the Bodhisattva before the Great Renunciation (namely, the old man signifying the principle of ceaseless change in the universe of becoming, the sick man signifying the inevitable decay of the living organism, the dead man signifying the fact that death is the end of all life and the recluse pointing to the way of release from *saṁsāra*) and the fact that the disciples of the Buddha were to form a saṅgha outside the limits of society are the proofs of the essentially asocial spirit of early Buddhism. It looked upon earthly life as a 'hole and corner' and renunciation as 'going forth into the open.' Hence an ideal arhat exerts himself and is not attached to the home. He turns his back on the world like a goose flying away from the pond knowing that the way to Nirvāṇa

[1]Gokhale, B.G., 'The Theravada Buddhist View of History', *JRAS*.

is different from the way to worldly gains. Such a view, as Gokhale remarks, could hardly encourage the development of historical awareness.[1]

Factors Facilitating the Rise of Historical Awareness in Buddhism

But despite treating the world as inconsequential as a fleeting bubbe, the early Buddhists developed a respect for historical awareness and chronological attitude towards worldly events. Gokhale has suggested several reasons for this paradox. Firstly, in the age of the Buddha history was regarded as an important item of the education of a man of culture. It was looked upon as the fifth Veda in the orthodox sections of society. The *Nikāyas* also refer to it as *itihāsapañchama* (history as the fifth) in the list of the achievements of the educated Brāhmaṇas. As a bodhisattva the Buddha himself was taught history also. Secondly, many of the Brāhmaṇa disciples of the Buddha— such as Sela, Sāriputta, Moggallāna etc., who must have been taught history also before their conversion, contributed to the historical awareness of the fellow monks. Thirdly, from an early date Buddhists felt the need of hagiological literature from which history was only a step away. Fourthly, early Buddhism came into contact with kings and nobles whose patronage was one of the main factors in whatever success the religion achieved and also for the maintenance of the saṅgha. Obviously kings like Aśoka could not be treated as nobodys. All these factors necessitated the compilation of a new kind of literature which could, on the one hand, fulfil the hagiological needs and, on the other, meet the problems created by the increasing contact of the royal power with the saṅgha. "The close identification of the state with the *dhamma* necessarily meant that the *saṃgha*, the repository of knowledge, should be cognizant of the vicissitudes of kings and countries with reference to the faith."[2] Fifthly, the growth of the cult of the stūpas, enshrining the relics of the Buddha and of his disciples necessitated the need of writing the history of those relics. Sixthly, there was felt the need of writing the history of sacred literature, and of the spread of religion.

Lastly, there were certain aspects of the Buddhist world-view which also facilitated the development of Buddhist historical tradition. Buddhism views reality at two levels—transcendental and phenomenal. "On the transcendental level history may be irrelevant,

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*

but on phenomenal level it is not only necessary but also significant. Secondly, Theravāda Buddhism did not subscribe to the theory of *māyā* or illusory nature of the phenomenal world. It may be nothing more than a flow of successive elements... but it is not unreal. This being so, it should not be difficult to chronicle events in this world."[1]

Development of Buddhist Historiography

Pali Canon as Historical Record

Theoretically the *Tripiṭaka* is a record of important episodes in the life of the Buddha including his discourses (*Sutta Piṭaka*) and the events connected with the foundation of the *saṅgha* and the enactment of its rules of organisation and discipline (*Vinaya Piṭaka*). The *Sutta Piṭaka* shows no overall chronological framework, the arrangement of the suttas being by length, topic and mnemonic convenience. The individual *Suttantas*, however, mostly have their place of origin noted, and sometimes the time, and they generally give a detailed and circumstantial account of the events leading up to the main discourse. The actual doctrine of the Buddha, then, is usually presented against a background of events. Thus the *Suttas* include glimpses of ancient history and some other accounts of ancient events. According to one account the first King elected by the assembly of the people was called Mahāsammata (the 'Great Elect'). The Buddha (or the compilers of the suttas) was clearly familiar with some version of universal history of the Purāṇas. But the Buddhists were not much interested in the deeds of ancient kings though they have recorded the deeds of some of them. The legends of the chakravarttins, whatever their origin, were no longer historical. The emperors were now ideals to be emulated, and the Buddhist monks valued the legends as examples which contemporary kings might be persuaded to follow. The first emperor was Mahāsammata, the man first elected to uphold justice. Sometimes he is identified with Manu. Others were Daḷhanemi, Reṇu, and Māndhātā, all mentioned in Brāhmaṇical or Jaina legend also. Traditions of more recent events, of historical kings such as Janaka of Videha and perhaps the ancient kings of Kāśī, the Upanishadic

[1]*Ibid.*

philosopher Uddālaka, probably a contemporary of king Janaka, and the fact that he taught at Takkhasilā (as in the *Chhāndogya Upa.*) are also remembered. This 'history', however, is already fading into legend and being adapted for the purpose of edification in much the same way as the stories of the legendary emperors.[1] The Pali canon records some contemporary events also. Those concerning the activities of the Buddha became a special category. They were not records of ordinary events but of "momentous events of cosmic significance, a significance which was not very apparent at first, perhaps (to the immediate followers of the Buddha), but which in any case gained strongly at the expense of the accuracy of the records as the personality of the 'perfect' Buddha (or still more of a Buddha) became a cosmic symbol. The Sthaviras, perhaps more than any other School, preserved ancient records of the Buddha as an ordinary human being living amongst his fellows, subject to sickness and weariness, but they too worked in an accompaniment of supernatural manifestations."[2] Then there are descriptions of many other events, political and social : the wars between Kosala and Magadha, the subjugation of the Vajjians, including the intrigues of Ajātasattu's minister Vassakāra, the building of the city of Pāṭaliputta, etc. The kingdom of Magadha occupies the central position in these accounts. The *saṅgha* had close relations with the king at all times and records of the transactions between them were of great practical importance.

The *Vinaya* purports to be essentially a record in chronological order of the events following the Enlightenment, especially of the gradual enactment of rules for the harmonious life of the *saṅgha*. Prefixed to the central narrative is the *Pātimokkha*, which consists of the rules for individual discipline of members of the *saṅgha* arranged as sūtra and commentary, the sūtra stating the rule and the commentary stating the circumstances in which it first came to be formulated. The rules are arranged in groups according to the types of disciplinary action required in case of infringement. According to Warder, within each group the sequence is probably chronological.[3] The *Khandhakas* (*Mahāvagga* and *Chullavagga*) contain mostly the regulations relating to the organization of the *saṅgha* apparently

[1]Warder, A. K., in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. by C. H. Philips, London, 1961, p. 50.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 47.

established as particular difficulties cropped up. To some extent they have been regrouped by related topics. Supplementary sections were added dealing with the foundation of the female branch of the *saṅgha* and with the first two Councils. In describing the foundation of the Buddhist community and proceeding apparently in chronological order to record subsequent events in that community, the *Vinaya* in fact began a history of Buddhism.[1] These records of the activities of the Buddha were regarded as authentic historical records of the events connected with the foundation of the *saṅgha* and the promulgation of the Doctrine. The records are circumstantial and realistic and purport to be eye-witness accounts of the events. Some eye-witness reports, at least, formed the model for this unique style of literature, although later on forgeries in the same style were produced in order to give currency to new doctrines. The bias of the repeaters sometimes becomes apparent in the form of improbable eulogies of the Buddha by converted opponents. Sometimes miracles are concocted for proving the greatness of the Buddha and his doctrine.

Commentaries as Historical Records

Sometime in the middle of the fourth century B.C. the Buddhist community split. Now the separate schools began to keep their historical records separately, not including them in the *Tripiṭaka*. Thus in the Sthaviravāda school (which eventually had its main centre in Ceylon) after the narrative of the Second Council (*c.* 380 B.C.) had been incorporated in the *Chullavagga*, the *Sthavira Khandhakas* came to be regarded as closed and canonical texts which ought not to be altered or added to. Now it developed its tradition of interpretation of the Tripiṭaka known as commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*). It was essential for the School to have its authorized version of the schisms and of its own history after the Second Council. All this was incorporated in the *Aṭṭhakathā* or Commentary, which remained fluid and continued to be added to. At the beginning of the ancient *Aṭṭhakathā* there appears to have been a long historical introduction : '*vaṁsa*', i.e. the history of the School with its succession of elders till an account of the establishment of the School in Ceylon and events there down to about the year 200 B.C. The same term *vaṁsa* is used in this sense in the Vedic tradition

[1]Warder, A. K., *An Introduction to Indian Historiography*, Bombay, 1972, p. 27.

also. Such texts as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* give *vaṁśas* of their teachers. The *Tripiṭaka* contains a *Buddhavaṁśa*, being the line of mythical *Buddhas* preceding Gautama Buddha at enormus intervals of time. "The extant version of the commentary on the *Vinayapiṭaka* gives a continuous historical narrative, including the establishment of the Sthaviravāda school in Ceylon, down to about 200 B.C., plus a *vaṃśa* of teachers down into the 1st century A.D. Another commentary (on the *Kathāvatthu*) deals extensively with the other schools of Buddhism as they split off from the Sthaviravāda. The *Dīpavaṃśa* ('History of the Island', i.e. of Ceylon, but it deals with ancient Indian history as well), already mentioned, is another available version of the same old commentary tradition, or rather a composite work compiling history from different sources perhaps all within the tradition. It carries the narrative on to the middle of the 4th century, at the end of which it was probably written (the coincidence with the terminating of the Purāṇic universal history is remarkable). After this the history of Ceylon continued to be written by the Buddhists from time to time and has been carried down without interruption to modern times."[1]

Buddhist Historiography in India

Contrasted with the rich historiography of Ceylon, we have only a few scattered works of the Buddhists of India. In India historical records were usually called *vaṁśas*. But the Buddhist *vaṁśas* were often much more than genealogies. In the case of religious schools they recorded the descent of the tradition (*āgama*) from its origins in ancient times, with all the attendant circumstances which threatened to interrupt it but were successfully overcome. "There were, however, other categories related to historical composition, such as the *apadāna* or legend of the remote past, the *ākhyāna* or epic tradition of the more recent past, and the traditions of the Brāhmaṇas known as *itihāsa-purāṇa*. The tradition concerning the origins of society is called *aggañña*." As noted above, *vaṁśas*, *apadānas*, etc. of various kinds existed in India in the Sthaviravāda Canon and, at least after c. 350 B.C., in the Commentaries which grew up in the School. "They also existed in the traditions of other Schools of Buddhism. In India itself all this literature vanished with the great monasteries in which Buddhist learning had been accumulated. Sthavira literature was

[1]Warder, *Indian Historiography*, p. 28.

taken to Ceylon during and after the third century B.C. and much of it has been preserved there. Selections of the literature of other Schools were later taken to Central Asia, China, Tibet, Mongolia, and other countries and preserved mostly in translations."

Among the Buddhist historical works found in India there is the historical section of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, a Mantrayāna (Tantra) text of which the original has been preserved in Kerala. This carries the general history of India down to the 8th century, though in a sketchy and often cryptic manner. It is useful for the Nanda period, the Mauryas, Guptas, Maitrakas (of Valabhī), Maukharis, Pushyabhūtis and Gopāla. It can be richly supplemented by the Tibetan historian Tārānātha's (17th century) works and to some extent by that of Bu-ston (14th century). Tārānātha evidently compiled from many works of Indian origin but at places he is highly confused. The Kushāṇas are dealt with as Chandras, since they were a 'Lunar' dynasty.[1] They were called Lunar because they originated from the Yueh-chi tribe—yueh meaning moon in Chinese. The history of the kings of Eastern India (Magadha, etc.) is even more confused. However, from the Pāla dynasty (·th century) onwards it is presented in a more satisfactory manner, along with other later kings. The Turkish invasions are discussed in some detail, with the gradual wiping out of Buddhism in India and flight of refugees to various neighbouring countries. On this we have also the Tibetan biography of Dharmasvāmin.[2] "For the history of the schools of Buddhism we have works by Vasumitra, Bhāvaviveka, Paramārtha and Vinītadeva. Finally we have the *Avadāna* literature, supposed to be a part of the *Tripiṭaka*, especially the *Aśokāvadāna* in several recensions on the great Maurya emperor, Aśoka. The original *avadānas* were stories of the Buddha and previous *buddhas* and of the followers of the Buddha, usually concerning their previous lives : a story of a previous life of the Buddha, however, is called a *jātaka*. In principle an *avadāna* seems to mean a great action having descisive consequences, whereas a *vaṃśa* implies some kind of succession, of a tradition or of a dynasty. Naturally we regard *avadāna* stories of past lives as mythical or fictitious, but the claim was made that they could actually be remembered, thus they constitute a kind of branch of history for those who accept such evidence of the past."[3]

[1]*Ibid*., p. 28 f.
[2]*Ibid*., p. 29.
[3]*Ibid*.

Pali Chronicles of Ceylon

Here a few words on the Pali chronicles of Ceylon will not be out of place because they were based on the traditions which were Indian in origin, at least so far as they describe the history of Buddhism before its arrival in Ceylon. The *Dīpavaṁsa*, composed in the fifth century A.D., is the earliest extant attempt to write a history of the island from the *Siṁhala-aṭṭhakathāmahāvaṁsa*. The title *Dīpavaṁsa* literally means the history of the island. It has been described as a work that 'can hardly be called a production of artistic merit', as 'a stringing together of fragments' and as displaying 'a clumsiness and an incorrectness of language and metre.'[1]

In the sixth century A.D. Mahānāma, a monk of the Mahāvihāra, wrote the *Mahāvaṁsa*, basing it on the *Siṁhala-aṭṭhakathāmahāvaṁsa* of the Mahāvihāra, completing it in thirty-seven chapters and bringing it to the end of the reign of Mahāsena. Together with its continuation the *Chūlavaṁsa*, it forms the great Chronicle of Ceylon. It is the most valuable source for the history of the island. But for all its historical value it is not history as we know it today. Myth and legend and poetry and religion have combined to form a veil between the historian and his history.[2] Its author was essentially a poet who used the literary conventions of his time. In the selection of his material and the arrangement of his subjects he has displayed a sense of balance in keeping with his purpose. In the process, he has somewhat reduced its historical value.[3] The further continuation of the Chronicle was without doubt due to the tradition set by the *Mahāvaṁsa*, especially the last five chapters of it. We can assume that several hands had from time to time compiled it drawing material from royal and *vihāra* records, histories of relics and shrines, legends, folklore, and personal experiences of the events described. Unfortunately none of these has survived. In the twelfth century A.D., soon after the death of Parākramabāhu I (A.D. 1153–86), a monk named Dhammakīrtti made use of such chronicles and records as existed and continued the Chronicle to the end of that reign.[4]

[1]Perera, L. S., 'The Pali Chronicles of Ceylon', in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 31.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 31.

[4]*Ibid.*

Philosophy of History

Concepts of Space and Time

The Buddhist view of history, as it developed in course of time, was influenced by the basic philosophical tenets of the religion. Though the Buddha had discouraged speculations about the nature of the world—whether it is eternal or non-eternal—there are found in the early Buddhist texts some ideas about the form of the world and concept of time—the two basic requisites for historical thinking. Explaining the causes of earthquakes the Buddha states that the earth is established on water, the water on wind and wind on space. When the winds below, the waters are stirred and the earth is shaken. The world is very vast and is always moving towards evolution or dissolution. The Buddhist cosmology also speaks of Mount Meru as the centre of the world which is built up in a series of concentric islands of which *Jambudīpa*, that is the Indian sub-continent, is the foremost. There are also heavens and hells where human beings repair to enjoy or suffer for the acts they perform on earth.[1]

In India the Brāhmaṇas had evolved a cosmic framework which divided time into *kalpas* and *yugas*. This involved a cyclic or repetitive conception of history. They added to this the theory of cultural regress and considered the present age, *Kali Yuga*, the worst. This cyclic conception of history was the result of their philosophy of world and life which places the ultimate reality and the goal of life outside the succession of births and rebirths, that is outside the process of history.[2] History itself was of little significance, therefore, except as a means to an end. Buddhism borrowed from Brāhmaṇism both its basic philosophical pattern and features of its cosmogony. Thus the cyclic concept of history with its repetitive ages became a part of the Buddhist tradition also.

The basic idea here was that of moral regress as opposed to the modern idea of progress. At the earliest stage of society, when all its members were made of the stuff of mind and morally perfect, there was no state or kingship, no sex or marriage, no property, no work, no caste, no war, no old age, or disease. There was perfect peace. But gradually bodies of beings became coarser, sex distinctions appeared, private property came into being and in order to main-

[1]Gokhale, *op. cit.*

[2]Vide, Buddha Prakash, *Studies in Indian History and Civilization*, p. 1 ff.

tain peace a man was elected king.[1] Thus the institutions of civilization (including caste, the Vedic religion, and especially the practice of retiring from the world to escape its evils) are explained. Elsewhere the evolution of society is associated with a progressive shortening of human life. "The original life-span was 80,000 years. When poverty first became widespread, and as a result of it theft and murder, the span became shortened to 40,000. Afterwards lying, adultery and other immoral behaviour resulted in further reductions until the present span of 100 years was reached. The process will continue (even the word *kusala*, 'good' or 'moral', will no longer exist) until eventually it will be reversed as a result of the rediscovery of the advantages of mutual co-operation as an alternative to mutual destruction."[2] However, though adopting the Brāhmaṇical concept of kalpas and yugas with some modifications, Buddhism did not inherit its disregard for history. The Buddha invested his work with a sense of mission and historic purpose. In the Buddhist view the most significant event in a *kappa* (kalpa) is the appearance of a Buddha. It invests history with significance, for it is only with such an appearance that *nibbāna*—the *summum bonum* of human life—becomes possible. It assumes added significance in view of the fact that the birth of a being as a human is very rare. If a man were to throw into the vast ocean a yoke with a single hole and there were a blind turtle popping upto the surface once in a century, it would be very rare indeed for that blind turtle to get its neck into that hole of the yoke. The opportunity of a human life is that rare.[3] Therefore one must utilize with greatest care the opportunity of being born as a human being and knowing the Law as preached by the Buddha. Thus Buddhism became a missionary and a propagating religion and time and geography came to be a matter of consequence.[4] But it did not make the Buddhists discard the cyclic conception of history. Rather they worked new ideas into the old pattern. Thus twenty-four Buddhas of previous ages were discovered and the Buddha Maitreya, the one who is to come, strangely enough, gives an apocalyptic twist to a cyclic concept.[5]

[1]Cf. de Bary Wm. Theodore, et. al., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Delhi, 1963, p. 130 ff.

[2]Warder, in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 49.

[3]Gokhale, *op. cit.*

[4]Warder, *op. cit.*

[5]*Ibid.*

Laws of History : Dhammatā and Causation

But the appearance of a Buddha and the birth of one as a human being are not accidents of history; they are events conditioned by the inexorable law—*dhammatā*. The concept of *Dhammatā* is in a way comparable to the Vedic concept of *ṛta*. It is the law of nature, a cosmic law. Its operation makes the world a cosmos and not a chaos. This order is five-fold namely, the order of *kamma*, of seasons, of life-germs, of mind and of *dhamma*.[1] All historical events are caused by this inexorable law. The vast universe and the equally endless chain of time are thus made amenable to rational understanding through a comprehension of *dhammatā* or law.

Another significant theory which conditioned early Buddhist view of history is the theory of causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*). It is explained by the formula : 'if this exists, that happens; if this ceases that too ceases.' The basic premise of this theory is that nature is bound by an iron chain of causality. This causal evolution is not a mechanical process but "one state working itself into another or informing it with ceaseless pulsation."[2] Nothing exists absolutely and eternally and nothing perishes absolutely.[3] Buddhaghosha explains the term as an attempt to exclude all theories of absolutism, nihilism, chance, irregular causation and indeterminism.[4] He further develops this theory by positing the concepts of *samaya* and *samavāya*. *Samaya*, according to him, is "harmony of anticidents" and points out that this concept explicitly rejects the theory of single causes or unilateral causation (*ekakāraṇavāda*). The *Ṭikā* further explains that the two specific theories rejected by this are those ascribing the origin of the world to a creator (*issarakāraṇavāda*) or to nature (*pakatikāraṇavāda*).[5] "Causes, it is further argued, in order to produce a result, must operate in a specific relationship to each other. Hence, events are unique for the relationships of causes leading to them are in themselves unique. History may be repetitive, in the sense that the general configuration of events constituting it may bear resemblances to earlier or later configurations, but the events themselves are unique. . . . Events by themselves may not be

[1]Rhys Davids, T. W., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 1959, pp. 8-9, n. 3.
[2]Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, I, pp. 373, 374.
[3]Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, p. 43.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 46.
[5]Gokhale, *op. cit.*

causes but become so when they are interrelated. A seed, by itself, cannot produce the sprout because sprouting as a *process* occurs only with the concatenation of several factors like the seed, soil, water, air and cultivation. Each of these is a factor and becomes a cause only when it enters into a timely and specific relationship with others. This is the nearest that the early Buddhists came to stating a theory of multi-lateral and simultaneous causation which has obvious implications for understanding historical causation. It has validity as much in explaining the becoming of a Buddha as that of any other historical event. Causation, therefore, is a concatenation of several potentially causative factors which are activated as causes only when they enter into a specific and opportune relationship with each other. History, thus, is an unfolding of a number of divergent factors coming together in a unique relationship to produce the flow of events whose chronicle it becomes. Geography, economy, polity, social systems, ideational influences and the working of the human mind through dispositions and volition are all factors of consequence in human history."[1]

Doctrine of Kamma and Search for Pattern in Historical Process

Another theory relevant for understanding the Buddhist view of history is the doctrine of kamma. The causes, order and effects of events are determined by *kamma.* The world revolves on kamma and beings journey through the effects of kamma, like the axle of chariot travelling with the wheel.[2] According to A. K. Warder the theory of *kamma* produced 'types' in earty Buddhist historical writings with the result that even great figures like Aśoka lose their individuality. "In Buddhist historiography", he suggests, "one may distinguish between primary historiography and secondary historiography. The first means the more or less contemporary and direct records of events. The second means later retelling of such events and frequently implies a degree of shift from history into legend. Thus in the *Tripiṭaka* we have substaintial (*sic.*) narratives of a circumstantial character concerning the activities of the Buddha, apparently a more or less direct record of events and not something constructed in accordance with any preconceived theory. Later, we have successive biographies

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*; Barua, 'The Role of Buddhism in Indian Life and Thought', *IC*, XIII, No. 2, p. 106 ff.; also see Buddha Prakash, *Studies in Indian History and Civilization*, p. 12 f.

of the Buddha such as the *Mahāvastu*, *Nidānakathā*, *Śākyamuni-buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara* and Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, in which the narrative is more and more transformed into a legend : the events are not such as we would expect in a circumstantial historical narrative, but fit into certain patterns. Nothing is accidental, everything has significance. In fact all actions are supposed to be conditioned by past actions according to the Buddhist doctrine of moral causality. Just as an action is related to past events, so it is pregnant with its future consequences. This patternising naturally led secondary Buddhist historians to select, distort and imagine events in such a way as to improve the ethical picture of history presented. In addition to this question of the moral truth, so to speak, of a narrative, we are faced with the aesthetic truth when the artistic side of literature (epic poetry, etc.) is dominant : Aśvaghoṣa for example is one of India's greatest poets, not a historian."[1] Elsewhere Warder elaborates his suggestion thus : "The monks looked for a regular pattern in contemporary events (as in past events) : for the workings of *karma* and the evolutions of the world within the limits set by the laws of causality. They recorded selected events, but also interpreted them and adduced them as illustrations of their doctrine. This led gradually to falsification as the memory of the events grew dim. Any event gradually lost its particularity and became general and symbolic. Individuals like Aśoka faded into types just as the Buddha had done. Udena became the popular figure of the gallant king, contrasted with Pajjota the ferocious tyrant. Briefly stated, the tendency was to assimilate the events of the present and of the recent past to those of the distant and legendary past, and indeed to those of the distant future when the present deterioration of society would be reversed and the world would become peaceful and densely populated (with as many cities as Aśoka had built *thūpas*) in anticipation of the advent of Metteyya.

"The attitude in the Commentaries is similar to that in the Canon, being a gradual development from it. The process of *shift* from history to legend, from the particular to the general, continues. Udena and Pajjota . . . are historical figures in the Canon but became legendary figures in the Commentaries. For example the *Dhammapada* Commentary has a long section on Udena in which we see him already in the character in which he appears in the *Bṛhatakathā* (*sic.*) (the

[1]Warder, *Indian Historiography*, p. 29 f.

legendary father of the fictitious *cakkavattin* Naravāhanadatta) and in Bhāsa's plays. Indeed Dhāmaha's criticisms of parts of the story of his capture by Pajjota by means of an artificial elephant, as incredible, might already be applied. Aśoka also, who is not mentioned in the Canon and appears first in the Commentaries—standing in the midst of the period of the great schisms with which the old '*vaṃsa*' was naturally much preoccupied—very rapidly became a legendary and general figure. In the Commentaries, we find the historical record of Aśoka with miraculous accretions appended to it. In the *Mahāvaṃsa* (and even in the much earlier *Aśokāvadāna* of another School) the shift is complete.

"There is no clear line of demarcation between the Canonical traditions and the Commentarial extensions of them. The Commentaries grew up round the Canon from a very ancient period, although at least after about the time of 'Third Council' they were kept quite distinct. They add a great deal to the legends of the Canon and perhaps try to systematize them and sometimes to bring them into line with traditions other than the Buddhist (e.g. the identification of Mahāsammata with Manu already mentioned). In the *Jātaka* Commentary we find besides the stoiy of Māndhātā his ancestry leading back to Mahāsammata."[1] Thus, according to Warder, the search for a regular pattern in events within the context of the theory of *kamma* led to falsification of events related in the Buddhist historical writings. Against this view Gokhale has argued that "search for historical typology is a universal phenomenon and one need not explain it in early Buddhism solely in terms of the theory of *kamma*. . . . An Aśoka may have been a product of his past *kamma* but that does not mean that he was a mere puppet divested of all individual will. The theory of *kamma*, makes man the arbiter of his own history and introduces the human elements in what otherwise would be a chronicle of events mechanically following each other. It is quite true that the theory is open to use (or abuse) to illustrate a special moral as the Early Buddhists did want to illustrate. But the dangers inherent in such an undertaking are not exclusive to Buddhist historiography. *Kamma* is decisive in human affairs but it is not a blind force. For kamma is *cetanā* (*cetanā' ti bhikkhave kamma' ti vadāmi*) and *cetanā*, will or volition, is a matter of human autonomy. Man in history is,

[1]Warder, A.K., 'The Pali Canon and its Commentaries as an Historical Record,' Philips, C.H. (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961, p. 51 f.

therefore, an autonomous 'individual', and can fulfil his own destiny in the way he wills."[1]

Sources of Historical Knowledge

As regards the means of gaining historical knowledge it is obvious that the past cannot be a matter of direct perception. But in Buddhist view direct and perceptual knowledge of past events cannot be altogether ruled out in the case of those who are sufficiently advanced on the spiritual path. The Buddha and some of his disciples could, it is believed, recall their countless former lives in all their details. The idea of foreknowledge and the power of prophecy, so widely employed in the elaboration of legends and myths and in the attribution of importance and significance to events and persons, was partly based upon the belief in the cycles of ages and the repetition of the historical process. "This seems also involved with the theory of *Karma*. The knowledge of the past and the future however derives from the belief in the six supernormal powers of Buddhas and Arhants. The occurrence of auspicious signs and symbols too, implies a preordination of events by cyclic or karmic force. The connection between these is never clear. In the narration of events, however, there is no conception of fatalism discernible."[2] Further such a knowledge, though spiritually of great importance, from the point of view of historical reconstruction is of little consequence.

Memory is one of the great means of historical knowledge and the preservation of the *āchāriyaparamparā* (succession of elders) and of the texts containing the laws of the Order and the sermons of the Buddha, mainly depended, as in the Vedic tradition (śruti and smṛti), on memorization before the texts were committed to writing. Inference was also regrded as significant source of knowledge. Later Nāgasena is said to have explained to King Milinda that the knowledge of the Buddha, his teachings and his disciples and their acts, as also the acts of kings and people of old, is possible for later generations only through valid inferences. Written works (*potthaka-nibandha*) were also a great help for historical memory. That is why historical or quasi-historical works came to be written to commemorate the history of the faith.[3] The kings of bygone days, we are told, are

[1]Gokhale, *op. cit.*
[2]Perera, L.S., in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 33.
[3]*Ibid.*

known by their deeds preserved in books or through their monuments.[1]

Purpose and Object of History

In Buddhism "the object of history is to convince the faithful, persuade the sceptical and produce a feeling of joy in the minds of the devout. History, in this context, naturally partakes of the characteristics of a *subhāṣita* as one which is aptly phrased, is filled with *dhamma* (righteousness), is truthful (*sacca*) and is palatable (*piya*). On this score a historical account, in the Buddhist view, must not only contain facts but also that the facts must be so chosen as to inculcate a sense of morality and strengthen the faith of the believers. It is inevitable that in the pursuit of spiritual elevation through historical writing Buddhist historiography was the hagiological need felt by the early Buddhist communities of monks and nuns."[2] The monks could not desist also from drawing moral lessons from history and using it for edification. By the time historical tradition came to be firmly established, and was distinguished from pure hagiology, the concept of the Buddha had undergone a profound change. He was no longer the simple teacher of moral values but a *Mahāpurisa* (a super-human being), greater than the gods themselves.[3] In this thinking the Buddha and Dhamma are fully cap .ble of possessing miraculous qualities. It was bound to influence Buddhist historiography to a considerable degree. As a result, the line between the human and the non-human became vague and tenuous. To Buddhist monks it was well within the realm of possibility that gods, men, and demons could meet within the historical plane and also that men and animals could consort with each other. Though they would have recognized the rarity or even impossibility of these things within their own experience, outside it, in the past, the possibility would never be questioned.[4]

In Buddhism the main purpose of history is to demonstrate the impermanence of worldly wealth, pomp and power and the necessity to shun wickedness and pleasure which lead to death and hell, and to do works of merit which lead to heaven or *Nirvāṇa*. A moral purpose is also implicit in the judgement the authors sometimes pronounce

[1]Gokhale, *op. cit.*

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]Perera, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

on kings at the end of their reigns. The kings who supported the religion and saṅgha and did meritorious deeds naturally receive appreciative notice while those who were either indifferent to the faith or persecuted it are either dismissed with scant attention or condemned outright. Some are, as in the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* or the Chronicles of Ceylon, sent to hell, some to heaven, and some just 'fall into the jaws of death.' Thus increasing dependence of the Order on royal patronage and protection introduced a bias in the historical appraisal of kings and noblemen.[1] In the words of Gokhale 'History being written with a purpose had to subserve that purpose.'

In Buddhist historical works political lessons are hardly ever drawn from history. Though the political function of the king was recognized "as giving happiness to the people, maintaining law and order and giving protection, it is only when conditions get so disorganized that life becomes impossible that these ideals find specific mention, but even then there is no didactic purpose." Similarly, it can hardly be said that patriotism was a motive for the Buddhist authors. The objection to foreign rulers, whether in India or Ceylon, seems to be not so much that they had foreign blood, but that they did not patronize the *saṅgha* or destroyed or plunderd the *vihāras* and shrines. However, they are usually faithful in recording the abuses within the *saṅgha* as well as its purifications by regulative acts of kings that were necessary from time to time. "It is perhaps natural that their belief in *Karma*, that no deed fails to bring its appropriate recompense, should produce a detached view in the records of the Buddhists, but such detachment is not always found, and became very rare in texts written in Ceylon and Burma, where the *Saṅgha* was usually closely dependent on a single state and tending to become a 'national church'—consequently itself playing a leading part in the politics of the country. In India, which was normally divided into several states, the *Saṅgha* remained detached, as it was at its origin. Its relations with kings were carefully defined, so that all kings might tolerate it. It not only accepted the laws of any country as binding on all communities resident there, but allowed kings to interfere in its internal affairs also. In this way a democratically organized community compromised with autocratic monarchy to secure toleration."[2]

[1]Thapar, R., *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 147.
[2]Warder, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Chapter 18

BUDDHIST SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Early Buddhist Education

Buddhist education and learning[1] centred round monasteries as Vedic education centred round the cult of sacrifice. Actually the history of Buddhist education is a part of the history of Buddhist monachism.[2] All Buddhist education, sacred as well as secular, was in the hands of the monks. "From the very beginning the life of monk-educator was held in high esteem, and it thus attracted creative and talented individuals ... The monks' educational activities were based on Buddha's injuction to the monks to go out into the world and teach them dhamma out of sympathy for the world, out of concern for the welfare and happiness of the multitude."[3] The rules of Buddhist education were a part of the rules of the saṅgha. These rules were modelled upon those of numerous other monastic orders, and also of Brāhmaṇical education. For example the ceremony of initiation into the saṅgha follows closely the rules of Brāhmaṇical initiation. Further, as in Brāhmaṇism, finding of a teacher was a pre-condition for ordination in Buddhism also. "Let no one, O bhikkhus, who has no Upājjhāya, receive the Upasampadā ordination."

Pabajjā and Upasampadā

The first step in Buddhist intiation is called Pabajjā. It means that a person presents himself for admission into the saṅgha by "going

[1]For Buddhist system of Education, vide, Mookerji, R. K., *Ancient Indian Education*, Delhi, 1974, Chapters XIII-XXIV; Altekar, A. S., *Education in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1975, Ch. X A; Dutt, S., in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Bapat, P. V. (ed.), Delhi, 1959, Ch. VIII; Joshi, L.M., *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India*, Delhi, 1967, Ch. VI.

[2]Dutt, S., *op. cit.*, p. 177.

[3]Aronson, Harvey B., 'Motivations to Social Action in Theravāda Buddhism : Uses and Misuses of Traditional Doctrines', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, p. 1.

out" of his previous state. Like the Brāhmaṇical Upanayana it has been compared to a spiritual birth.[1] Theoretically the admission into the Order was thrown open to all the castes. And people of low caste like Upāli (a barber) did avail the opportunity of entering the saṅgha. However, in practice the admission to the saṅgha was mostly sought by persons who were spiritually advanced enough to adopt the life of a monk. It was not permitted to youths seeking it without the consent of their parents and to people suffering from glaring physical or moral defects. A due discharge of one's legal obligations before entering the Order was also insisted upon.

When a layman presented himself for Pabbajjā before an elder, the latter invested him with the yellow robe and called upon him to utter the Triśaraṇa formula thrice. With this inaugurated the period of his novitiate which ended with the ordination of the Upasampadā, marking his arrival at the full status of monkhood. An important point of distinction between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist systems of education was that in the former after the completion of education the snātaka returned home, while in the latter he became a monk

Relationship of the Ordained Monk with Āchārya and Upādhyāya

The ordained monk was placed in charge of two superiors qualified by learning, character, and standing. They are called the Āchārya and Upādhyāya. The Upādhyāya was the higher authority entrusted with the duty of instructing the young bhikkhu in the sacred texts and doctrines, while the Āchārya assumed responsibility for his conduct. The period of dependence (*nissaya*) was at least ten years. The relations between the pupil and the Āchārya are indicated thus : "The Āchāriya, O Bhikkhus, ought to consider the Antevāsika as a son; the Antevāsika ought to consider the Āchāriya as father."

The Buddhist system of education, like the Brāhmaṇical, enjoined upon the student the duty of serving his preceptor. He was not to enter the village or go to a cemetery or go abroad on journeys without his teacher's permission. The teacher was also to give the pupil under his charge all possible intellectual and spiritual help and guidance 'by teaching, by putting questions to him, by exhoratation, and by instruction.'[2] If the pupil fell ill, the teacher was to nurse him as long as his life lasted. The relations of the pupil

[1]Altekar, A. S., *op. cit.*, p. 229, n. 1.
[2]Mookerji, R.K., *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 404.

towards his teacher did not, however, transcend those toward the saṅgha as a whole to which they both owed a common allegiance. Where the teacher offended gravely against the saṅgha, the pupil was to get him duly punished by the saṅgha.[1] There were also rules for the expulsion of a pupil by his teahcer. Teachers' qualifications are also exhaustively enumerated. He must be well up "in what belongs to moral practices, self-concentration, wisdom, emancipation, and the knowledge and insight thereto." He must be "believing (not guilty of heresy), modest, fearful of sinning . . . and must be able to train a pupil in the precepts or proper conduct, to educate him in the elements of morality, to instruct him in what pertains to the Dhamma, to instruct him in what pertains to the Vinays, to discuss or to make another discuss according to Dhamma a false doctrine that might arise."[2] The unit of the Buddhist educational system was thus the group of young bhikkhus or monks living under the guardianship of a common teacher, the Upājjhāya. They federated themselves into a larger unit called the vihāra or monastery.

Educational Atmosphere in Vihāras

Special rules were required to maintain harmonious relations between different groups. Disciplinary action against the novices of a group was taken usually through the head of the group i.e. the Upājjhāya of the novices concerned. These were naturally determined by the ends of monastic life and discipline. Two fundamental principles mark out monastic life—celibacy and poverty. A monk could not count as his exclusive possession more than eight articles, viz. the three robes, a girdle for the loins, an alms-bowl, a razor, needle, and a water strainer. This self-imposed poverty of the monk was further emphasized daily by his begging rounds. Begging of food was confined to approved households. Seeking food uninvited at an approved household was also forbidden. It is however undeniable that the vow of poverty, enjoined rigorously upon the individual monk, was not at all meant for the saṅgha which the Buddha himself had permitted to grow rich by allowing it to receive the benefactions of its lay-wellwishers which flowed in an abundant stream under his direct encouragement.[3]

[1]*Ibid.*, p. 405 ; Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 229–30.
[2]Mookerji, *op. cit.*, p. 406.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 412.

The vihāra was originally composed of the huts of single bhikkhus. Such vihāras lay near one another in numbers. Later, the term came to denote a larger building with apartments for many monks. The best example of an early *Vihāra* is that of the one constructed by the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika. Early Buddhist India was noted for its four chief centres or cities at each of which the *saṅgha* owned a number of vihāras serving as the seats of Buddhist learning and education. Thus we read of Yashṭivana, Veḷuvana, and Sītavana at Rājagṛha; Jetavana and Pubbārama at Śrāvastī; Mahāvana, Kūṭāgāra Hall and Mango-grove at Vaiśālī; and Nigrodhārāma at Kapilavastu. We also read of Ghoshitārama at Kauśāmbī and the Mango-grove of Chunda, the Smith, at Pāvā.[1]

The vihāras provided "ample opportunties for business training or education in the practical arts and crafts for their inmates. Along with the supervision of building operations of a vihāra the bhikkhus were allowed the use of a loom and of shuttles, strings, tickets and all the apparatus belonging to a loom." The bhikkhus are also represented as being ill at ease without the practice of some handicraft. They were also expected to prepare their own robes and keep them in a fit condition with the help of all necessary weaving appliances.[2]

It was however for religious education that the monks were brought together in the monasteries. Therefore every bhikkhu was expected to accept a pupil and confer the Upasampadā ordination on him. The ordinary instruction of a pupil-monk seems to have comprised "the giving of recitation, holding examination, making exhortion, and explaining the Dhamma." We read of some bhikkhus specializing in reciting the Dhamma, of some in propounding the Suttantas, of some being expert in the Vinaya, and of some specializing as preachers of the Dhamma. The lowest class seems to have been made up of students "who were repeaters of the Suttantas." The next higher class was of those students "who were in charge of the Vinaya." To a yet higher class belonged those bhikkhus who were training themselves up as teachers of the Dhamma. There were, lastly, bhikkhus of the highest classes who were given to the practice of the four meditations. Besides these, some bhikkhus were distinguished and classed as "Epicurians, being

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 443.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 445.

wise in wordly lore and abounding in bodily vigour."[1]

Bhikkhus differed from one another in other respects also. Hailing from different parts of the country, they differed in their dialects. The religion of the Buddha was preached through the popular speech as distinguished from the difficult and refined language, Sanskrit. As noted elsewhere the Buddha had ruled, "I allow you, O Bhikkhus, to learn the word of the Buddha each in his own dialect." Along with Sanskrit were tabooed several subjects of study, viz. the Lokāyata system together with the "low arts" of divination, spells, omens, astrology, sacrifices to gods, witchcrafts and quackery.

The Curriculum

According to L. M. Joshi there were three aims of Buddhist education—rigorous ethical and moral training, spiritual growth of the monks and preserving and defending the tradition (*āgama*) and doctrine (*Saddharma*).[2] Therefore the curriculum of the monks was based on the Suttanta, Dhamma and Vinaya. Education in the early Buddhist age was not dependent upon written literature. The evidence available does not point to the use of writing for the purpose of preserving and transmitting the extensive sacred literature. There is not the least reference to manuscripts in the detailed accounts which the Vinaya texts give of the property of the Buddhist ārāmas and vihāras in which all possible items from the bigger furniture to the smallest needle are enumerated or referred to. There are no references to such accessories of writing as ink, pen, style, leaves or other materials for writing and nor to the operations connected with the copying out of manuscripts which must have occupied a large part of the activities of the monks should they have had to do with written literature for their education. If the bhikkhus of a certain place did not know the Pātimokkha, one of them was commissioned to learn it from neighbouring fraternity and import the knowledge. Similarly, we read of lay-devotees or upāsakas inviting the fraternity of bhikkhus to hear them recite an important Suttanta so that they might learn it and preserve it from oblivion.[3] These passages not only show that the system of oral tradition was as much the characteristic of Buddhist as of Brāhmaṇical education but

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 448–49.
[2] Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 157–58.
[3] For details cf. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India.*

also suggest that the early Buddhist society did not know the art of writing.[1]

Mode of Teaching

Besides the regular teachers, the Upādhyāyas and Āchāryas, arrangements were also made for imparting of instruction by distinguished teachers who were acknowledged as authorities in their subjects. Thus Upāli was such a specialist in the Vinaya. He used to deliver his discourses standing out of respect for the senior monks and the seniors heard him standing out of their respect for the subject of his discourse. The texts tell us of the names of some other distinguished teachers such as Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākachchāna, Mahākoṭṭhita, Mahākappina, Mahāchunda, Anuruddha, Revata, Ānanda and Rāhula.

The Buddhist education laid stress upon the efficacy of the method of debate and discussion. Buddhism was interested in the cultivation by its leaders and votaries of the powers of debate by which it could spread and win converts from other religions. The places of such important discussions which marked religious life in those days were public halls which are called in the Pali texts

[1]In rencent years in several of our writings we have suggested the following three propositions: that the people of the Indian sub-continent, barring those of the north-west (roughly present Pakistan), did not know the art of writing in the centuries intervening the end of the Indus Civilization and the reign of Aśoka, that the Brāhmī script was not the result of evolution but was invented or created and that this invention took place in the early Maurya period, most likely in the early years of the reign of Asoka ('Brāhmī Script: An Invention of the Early Maurya Period', in *The Origin of Brāhmī Script*, ed. by S. P. Gupta and K. S. Ramachandran, 1979, pp. 1-53; *Magadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya*, New Delhi, 1981, p. 51ff; *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṃgraha*, Jaipur, 1982, pp. 18-27; *Kauṭilya and Megasthenes*, Meerut, 1985, Ch. 12). The total absence of the written records of the post-Indus Civilization and pre-Aśokan centuries, the testimony of Megasthenes who explicitly states that the Indians did not know art of writing when he visited this country in c. 300 B.C., the nature of Aśokan Brāhmī which has all the characteristics of an invented script and several other considerations prove that the art of writing came into existence in the Gaṅgā Valley in the early decades of the third century B.C. Our hypotheses have been accepted *in toto* by R. Nagaswamy and S. P. Gupta. Lallanji Gopal has expressed broad agreement with us though he places the invention of Brāhmī in the fourth century B.C. T. P. Verma also agrees with us inasmuch as he believes that Brāhmī script was invented just before or during the reign of Aśoka, though he believes in the existence of some other script in the Vedic age.

ranks and classes of society and representing diverse social conditions. Chāṇḍālas were not, however, admitted as students. The castes so admitted did not always confine themselves to their traditional subjects of study.

Side by side with these colleges of a heterogenous composition we also find references to colleges of particular communities only. Teachers were sometimes helped by a staff of assistant masters. The most advanced or senior pupils were usually appointed as assistant masters.[1] Colleges seems to have had a number of sittings every day. Instruction was usually imparted at times convenient to the students. The Jātakas constantly refer to students coming to Takkhasilā to complete their education in the three Vedas and the eighteen Sippas. The *Milinda Pañho* gives individual names of the eighteen Sippas then current. Students are mentioned as taking up for their study only one of these subjects in which they wanted to specialize. The study of these sciences and arts seems to have had both a theoretical as well as a practical course. Students of those days sometimes undertook an extensive foreign travel after their graduation to give a practical turn to their theoretical studies at the college.

Takkhasilā was also famous for some of its special schools. One of such school was the medical school which must have been the best of its kind in India as is apparent from the life-story of Jīvaka, the physician of Bimbisāra. Jīvaka is said to have studied there for seven years. It was also noted for its school of law which attracted students from distant Ujjenī. Its military schools were also not less famous.[2]

Next to Takkhasilā ranked Benaras as a seat of learning. It was, however, largely the creation of the ex-students of Takkhasilā who set themselves up as teachers at Benares. Subjects, in the instruction of which Takkhasilā held the monopoly, were gradually introduced at Benaras. There are several references to the teachers of Benaras of world-wide fame with the usual number of 500 pupils to teach.

Chinese pilgrims especially Fa-hsien, Yuan Chwang and I-tsing. Fa-hsien visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya (376–414 A.D.). His evidence brings us into touch with the Buddhist society of early fifth century, the chief centres of its learning, the actual working of its institutions, their internal conditions, rules, and regulations. Buddhist India in Fa-hsien's time extended from Udyāna on the north-western frontiers to Tāmralipti on the east and was noted for the abundance of monasteries which were centres of Buddhist learning.

Fa-hsien's account of the individual monasteries he himself visited in the course of his travels provides a fairly good idea of the educational facilities available in them. The monasteries, he tells us, were maintained by the endowments of the laity including kings and merchant princes. The time-honoured Brāhmaṇical system of oral tradition was still obtaining as the method of instruction even among Buddhists. Manuscripts of sacred texts which he could copy were found only in the Mahāyāna monastery at Pāṭaliputra and in the monasteries of Tāmralipti. Study of Sanskrit still continued in the Buddhist monasteries. But Buddhists alone did not have the monopoly of the education of the people. There were many other sects hardly less influential in the country than the Buddhists. In the Middle Kingdom alone Fa-hsien noticed no less than "ninety-six sorts of views erroneous and different from Buddhism."[1]

Education as Described by Yuan Chwang

Yuan Chwang visited India during the reign of king Harsha of Kanauj in the second quarter of the seventh century. By the time of his visit condition of Indian education had considerably changed. Yuan Chwang testifies to the ascendancy of Brāhmaṇism. India was "country of the Brāhmaṇas", says the traveller. "Among the various castes and clans of the country the Brāhmaṇas are purest and in most esteem." Sanskrit was the language of the cultured classes. "The people of Mid-India", the pilgrim reports, "are pre-eminently explicit and correct in speech." Students had to "learn the four Veda treatises." Instruction was imparted orally and characterized by much earnestness and painstaking labour on the part of the teacher. The period of studentship ended when the pupil was thirty years old. "Their minds being settled and their education finished they go into

[1]Mookerji, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

office." But the class of naishṭhika brahmachārīs, who chose to consecrate themselves to lifelong studentship and celibacy was not yet extinct. The highest aim of a school of learning was to produce in its alumni an absorbing love of learning for its own sake.[1]

In the age of Yuan Chwang the Buddhist thought in India was represented by a number of schools, each of which claimed and counted many monasteries specializing in the study of its doctrines and practices. The account of the pilgrim shows that though the period of Harsha was one of decline for Buddhism in India, yet the number of monks and monasteries was fairly large. The monasteries that were seen to be active and tenanted by monks numbered approximately 5,000, excluding those which Yuan Chwang describes as being dilapidated and deserted. The total monkish population in the parts of India visited by Yuan Chwang (including Ceylon) was as high as 212,130.[2] These numbers, of both monks and monasteries, are exclusive of those which are indicated not definitely but only vaguely by the words "few", "some tens", "several thousand", or "myriads." These monasteries produced some of the greatest leaders of Buddhism. Yuan Chwang broke his journey at several monasteries which were renowned as seats of learning either for their teachers or for their libraries and rare books. Thus in Kashmir the king appointed a senior monk with his disciples to minister to the needs of the pilgrim and twenty clerks to copy out the books he wanted from the Palace Library. These monasteries were in charge of the higher education of the country. They were like colleges to which students were admitted on completion of their preliminary education of which a separate account is given by Yuan Chwang. A child was first introduced to *Siddham* or a primer of twelve chapters giving the Sanskrit alphabet and the combinations between vowels and consonants. After his mastery of the *Siddham* he was introduced at the age of seven to the "great Śāstras of the Five Sciences" viz. Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Śilpasthānavidyā (the science of arts and crafts), Chikitsāvidyā (science of medicine), Hetu-vidyā (Nyāya, Logic, science of reasoning) and Ādhyātmavidyā (Inner science). It is thus clear that the elements of both secular and religious knowledge of philosophical and practical subjects entered into the composition of this elementry course of education meant for the sons of Buddhist parents.

[1]Mookerji, *op. cit.*, p. 506–7.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 523.

Contents of higher education at the monasteries were determined by the particular Buddhist Schools to which they belonged. Each sect had its own special literature bearing upon its characteristic tenets and practices and claimed a number of monasteries for their study and propagation. Sometimes a monastery accommodated monks of different Schools also. It proves that the Buddhist monasteries were not run in the narrow spirit of sectarian exclusiveness. In general the monasteries confined their studies and teachings within the limits of the Buddhist Canon but this usual limit was transgressed by the inclusion of some subjects of study not strictly connected with the Buddhist scriptures.

The old Brāhmaṇical division between reciting the texts and understanding their meaning was still in force Monastic education devoted special attention to the development in the alumni of the power of public debates and exposition which were highly prized and rewarded. Each community of monks had its own hierarchy promoted according to a recognized system. "The intellectual tournaments by no means rare in their occurrence brought together scholars from distant and different parts of India, promoted active intercourse between different monasteries representing different schools of thought, and created a broad brotherhood of letters in which were united the intellectuals of different provinces."[1]

Indian Teachers of Yuan Chwang

The condition of Indian education and learning in the age of Yuan Chwang may be understood with reference to his own educational career in the country and the teachers who taught him.[2] He has recorded the names of a number of vihāras and their scholars who taught him. He quite often refers to their scholarship and the texts studied under their guidance. At Balkha in the Navasaṅghārāma he studied the *Vibhāshāśāstra* for a month under Prajñākara who had thoroughly studied the three Piṭakas of the Hīnayāna school. With Vinītaprabha of the Tu-se-sa-na vihāra of Chīnapaṭi in Punjab Yuan Chwang stayed for fourteen months. Vinītaprabha had mastered the three Piṭakas and written some commentaries also. Yuan Chwang studied *Abhidharmaśāstra* and some other texts under him. In the Nagardhana vihāra at Jalandhar the pilgrim studied *Prakaraṇa-pādavibhāshāśāstra* from Chandravarman with whom he stayed for

[1]Mookerji, *op. cit*, p. 533.
[2]Vide, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*, trans by S Beal, Delhi, 1973.

four months. With Jayagupta, who lived in a vihāra near the source of the Gaṅgā, Yuan Chwang remained for one winter and half the spring to listen the former's sermons on the *Vibhāshā* according to the Sautrāntika school. With Mitrasena of Matipura, who was deeply versed in the Tripiṭakas, he stayed for a month in the spring and the following summer studying from him *Tattvasatyaśāstra* and the *Abhidharmajñānaprasthānaśāstra*. Vīryasena of the Bhadravihāra, near Kanauj, with whom the pilgrim stayed for three months, taught him *Dharmavibhāshāvyākaraṇa*.

At the time of the visit of Yuan Chwang, Śīlabhadra was the Mahāsthavira of Nālandā. He was thoroughly versed in the sūtras and śāstras. Of all the scholars of Nālandā he alone could explain the whole collection of the sacred texts. From him Yuan Chwang studied *Yogāchārabhūmiśāstra*, *Nyāyānusāraśāstra*, *Hetuvidyāśāstra*, *Śabdavidyā* etc. At Nālandā the pilgrim also studied the *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini and scriptures of the Brāhmaṇas. He also defeated Siṁhasvāmī in debate and composed a śāstra in three thousand verses.

With Tathāgatagupta and Kshāntisiṁha of Hiraṇya country Yuan Chwang stayed for one year to study *Vibhāshā* and *Nyāyānusāraśāstra* from them. From an unnamed Brāhmaṇa scholar of South Kosala he studied *Hetuvidyā* and remained with him for one month. In Āndhra country Yuan Chwang stayed with Buddhist scholars named Subhūti and Sūrya to study *Mūlābhidharma* and other śāstras from them. In the capital city of the kingdom of Parvata in Punjab he remained with three unnamed Buddhist priests for two years to study the *Mūlābhidharmaśāstra* and some other texts from them. When he returned to Nālandā he went to a nearby vihāra where lived the famous priest Prajñābhadra, a follower of the Sarvāstivāda school. Yuan Chwang stayed with him for two months to get his doubts removed. At the hill called Yashṭivana, the pilgrim met the Kshatriya householder Jayasena, a master of various śāstras, the four Vedas and several other branches of knowledge. Yuan Chwang stayed with him for two years, studied several texts under him and got explanation of several doubtful passages. At Nālandā, a Brāhmaṇa heretic was defeated by Yuan Chwang in debate and made his servant. Later on, this servant become his teacher and explained a Hīnayāna texts to him.

During his return journey from India Yuan Chwang met Siṁhaprabha and Siṁhachandra, two famous Buddhist scholars who lived in a vihāra at Vinasana near Kauśāmbī. He stayed with them for

two months and studied several texts under them

Education as Described by I-tsing

Seventh century Indian education and learning has also been described by another Chinese traveller, I-tsing, who came to India in 672 A.D. I-tsing's object was to study and gather the genuine texts of the Vinaya rules. The places actually visited by him in India were much fewer than those visited by Yuan Chwang. The predominance of Brāhmaṇism over Buddhism was continuing in I-tsing's time. India was then known by the name of Brahma-rāshṭra. Sanskrit, called the Brahma language, was the language of even the Buddhists. I-tsing also refers to Brāhmaṇas as being "regarded throughout the five parts of India as the most honourable caste." "The scriptures they revere are the four Vedas, containing about 100,000 verses."

I-tsing gives an account of the general and elementary education of the times prior to the higher education in the monasteries. Education began at the age of six years. The first book of reading was called *Siddhirastu*, which gives 49 letters of the alphabet and 10,000 syllables. This Primer was finished in six months. The second book of reading was the *Sūtras* of Pāṇini. Next followed the book on *Dhātu*, and that on the three Khilas. The book read next was the *Kāśikāvṛtti*, "the best of all the commentaries on Pāṇini's *Sūtra*." After having studied this commentary students began to learn composition in prose and verse and devoted themselves to Logic (Hetuvidyā) and Metaphysics (Abhidharmakosha).

Of Medical Science, I-tsing mentions eight sections. According to him "these eight arts formerly existed in eight books, but lately a man epitomized them and made them into one bundle." All physicians in the five parts of India practised according to this book, and any physician who was well-versed in it never failed "to live by the official pay."[1]

There was a course of specialized and advanced studies in Vyākaraṇa which was "the name for general secular literature." Patañjali's *Sūtras* usually called the *Mahābhāshya*, the *Bhartṛhari-Śāstra*, the *Vākyapadiya* and the *Pei-na* (probably Sanskrit Beḍa) were prescribed for it. Student completing this advanced study were regarded as masters of grammatical science. There were again courses of specialization in religious or priestly studies which were organized

[1]Mookerji, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

and offered by the monasteries.

The rules laid down in the Vinaya texts regarding admission to monasteries, to priesthood and ordination, were substantially followed in the days of I-tsing. The candidate was now called an Upāsaka, which was his first step into the Law of the Buddha. After this he became an Upasaṁpanna Bhikkhu. Then he began the regular course of monastic education and discipline. The Upādhyāya imparted to his pupil the contents of the *Pātimokkha* as the first lesson. I-tsing also refers to the Vinaya practice of requiring for each priest under training two teachers called the Upādhyāya and the Karmāchārya. To the ordinary and traditional curriculum of specialized priestly studies in the monasteries which included the Vinaya works, the Sūtras and the Śāstras, some new works had been added. Among these I-tsing mentions the two hymns of 150 and 400 verses attributed to Mātṛcheṭa. Next to them he mentions the *Buddhacharita-kāvya* of Aśvaghosha which was "widely read or sung" and two other works viz. the *Jātakamālā* and Nāgārjuna's *Suhṛllekha.* Bhikshus could study the Yoga system also for which the curriculum included, as the first book of study, the *Yogacharyāśāstra*, followed by Asaṅga's Eight Śāstras, which are named. Similarly six Pādas or treatises are mentioned in connection with the study of the Abhidharma or Metaphysics and four Nikāyas or classes of works in connection with the Āgamas.[1]

What I-tsing observed of the relations between teacher and pupil was on the lines of the Vinaya rules already discussed. The entire daily conduct of the pupil was inspected by the teacher who "warns him of defects and transgressions."

The monks of the monasteries were suitably graded according to their capacities and the level of advance they attained—Śramaṇera (lowest grade), Dahara-(small) Bhikshu, and Sthavira. A Sthavira necessarily attained the position of an Upādhyāya and an Upādhyāya that of a Sthavira. *The highest grade for Bhikkhu was that of the* Bahuśruta.

Most of the Buddhist monasteries had a secular section also. To this section were admitted students who were called Brahmachārīs. They had no intention of renouncing the world and becoming Buddhist monks. The monasteries further widened the scope of their usefulness by admitting to their religious sections even unordained

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 542.

students. These were called Māṇavas, who might be potential, but not actual, monks. They came to the monastery in the white robes of laymen. Both these classes of secular students, the Māṇavas and the Brahmachārīs, were also permitted to be in residence in the monasteries instead of being compelled to attend them as day-scholars. But they had to bring their own boarding expenses.

Kings in I-tsing's time, as in the days of old, were fond of organizing intellectual tournaments at which superior knowledge was tested and rewarded.

The Nalandā Mahavihāra

General Description

One of the greatest contributions of Buddhism to Indian educational system was the establishment of a large number of corporate educational institutions some of which may easily be called 'Universities' of that period.[1] This development took place from the fifth-sixth centuries A.D. when Nālandā monastery emerged as a University in eastern India. Fa-hsien, who visited this place in c. 410 A.D., does not refer to its educational importance. But very soon thereafter Nālandā rapidly rose into importance because of the patronage extended to it by a number of Gupta emperors. About this institution Yuan Chwang says: "In the establishment were some thousand brethern, all men of great learning and ability, several hunderds being highly esteemed and famous. . . . Hence foreign students came to the establishment to put an end to their doubts and then became celebrated and those who 'stole' the name (of Nālandā) were all treated with respect wherever they went."

The principals of Nālandā were as much famous for piety as for scholarship. Amongst them were included Dharmapāla, Chandrapāla, Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Jinamitra, Jñānamitra and Śīlabhadra. At the time of Yuan Chwang's visit the average scholarship of the University was also very high. Out of its 10,000 monks, there were a thousand who could explain thirty collections of Sūtras, and perhaps ten who could explain fifty. The University had a rich library also. I-tsing acquired copies at Nālandā of 400 Sanskrit books amounting to 5,00,000 verses. There were about a thousand comptent teachers to

[1]For details, vide, Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 159-74.

look after the education of about 10,000 monks. Personal attention was, therefore, possible to each student and the teaching was very efficient. The curriculum at Nālandā was very comprehensive and catholic. The University belonged to Mahāyāna Buddhism, but the works of the Hīnayāna school were also taught. Moreover subjects like Grammar, Logic and Literature common to both the Hindus and the Buddhists and the three Vedas, Vedānta and Sāṁkhya philosophy were taught at the University along with 'Miscellaneous Works.' The study of Chikitsāśāstra was also undertaken at the place.[1] At the head of the general administration of Nālandā was the Abbot-Principal, who used to be assisted by two Councils, one Academic and the other Administrative.

Hugeness and Magnificence of the Buildings of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra

The description of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra, as left by Yuan Chwang and I-tsing makes it obvious that in the seventh century it was a huge establishment. According to Yuan Chwang the ground on which it was built was originally a mango-garden belonging to a *śreshṭhin* (merchant-prince). It was purchased for ten lacs (or *koṭis*) of gold pieces by a group of 500 merchants who donated it to the *saṅgha*. Later on kings Śakrāditya (usually identified with the Gupta emperor Kumāragupta I Mahendrāditya), Buddhaguptarāja (emperor Budhagupta, probably Budha wrongly understood as Buddha), Tathāgatarāja (probably a repetition of the name of Budhagupta, Tathāgata being the synonym of Buddha whose name was misunderstood for the name of Budhagupta), Bālādityarāja (Narasiṁhagupta II Bālāditya), Vajra and a king of Mid-India built monasteries there.[2] Then a lofty enclosing wall was built round the whole establishment with one main gate probably by the same king of Mid-India, whosoever he was. In the first half of the seventh century the Mahāvihāra was patronised by Harsha, Pūrṇavarman (probably a Maukhari prince), Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa and probably Aṁśuvarman of Nepāla."[3] At the time it was "the most remarkable for grandeur and height."[4] The original monastery built by king Śakrāditya had become the centre of monasteries that were

[1]Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 121 ff.
[2]For details, see Goyal, S. R., *HIG*, p. 294.
[3]Joshi, L. M., *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India*, Delhi, 1967, p. 85.
[4]*Life*, p. 112.

added to it by other kings. According to L. M. Joshi,[1] this "monastic complex may be indicated through a plan as follows:

1. Saṁghārāma built by Kumāragupta I, on 'a lucky spot' in Nālandā;
2. to the south of this, Saṁghārāma built by Skandagupta;
3. to the east of this, Saṁghārāma built by Purugupta;
4. on the north-east side, Saṁghārāma built by Narasiṁha Gupta ('College of Bālāditya-Rāja');
5. on the west side (*Life*, p. 111, 'to the north') probably of the first Saṁghārāma, was the Saṁghārāma built by Kumāragupta II;
6. to the north of this, a great Saṁghārāma built by Harṣa;
7. on the western side of the Saṁghārāma, at no great distance, a Vihāra;
8. to the south, 100 paces or so, a small stūpa;
9. on this southern side, a standing figure of Avalokita;
10. to the south of this figure a stūpa with Buddha's relics;
11. to the east of this, outside the wall and by the side of a tank, a stūpa; beside this tank was a tree with a two-fold trunk;
12. next to the last, was a great Vihāra about 200 feet high;
13. to the north of this, another Vihāra with a statue of Avalokiteśvara;
14. to the north of this, another great Vihāra, about 300 feet high, built by Bālāditya;
15. to the north east of this, a stūpa;
16. to the south was a Vihāra built by Śilāditya (Harsha);
17. next to the east, outside the wall, a giant statue of Buddha, standing upright and made of copper. Its height was about 80 feet; a pavilian of 6 stages was required to install it; this pavilian was built by Pūrṇavarman.
18. To the north of this gigantic statue, at a small distance, was a Vihāra built of bricks which contained a figure of Tārā Boddhisattva;
19. within the southern gate of the wall was a large well;
20. a high wall built round these edifices, made of bricks by Harṣa;
21. the only gate to enter the premises of the Mahāvihāra; this

[1]Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*, p. 69 f.

gate was southern."[1]

Archaeological excavations at Nālandā have also shown that its establishment covered an area at least one mile long and half a mile broad. Its buildings were built according to a preconceived plan. The excavations have unearthed more than 11 large monastery sites and several temple sites, besides numerous Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical antiquities belonging to the Gupta and post-Gupta periods upto 11th century A.D.[2]

A graphic and enthusiastic picture of the architecture, sculpture and the general physical beauty of the Nālandā establishment is recorded in the biography of Yuan Chwang. "The whole establishment", it says, "is surrounded by a brick wall, which encloses the entire convent from without. One gate opens into the Great College, from which are separated eight other halls, standing in the middle (*of the Saṁghārāma*). The richly adorned towers, and the fairy like turrets, like pointed hill tops, are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the vapour (*of the morning*), and the upper rooms tower above the clouds.

"From the windows one may see how the winds and the clouds (*produce new forms*), and above the soaring eaves the conjunctions of the sun and moon (*may be observed*).

"And then we may add how the deep, translucent ponds, bear on their surface the blue lotus, intermingled with the Kie-ni (*Kanaka*) flower, of deep red colour, and at intervals the Āmra groves spread, over all, their shade.

"All the outside courts, in which are the priests' chambers, are of four stages. The stages have dragon projections and coloured eaves, the pearl-red pillars, carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrades, and roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand shades, these things add to the beauty of the scene."[3]

Not only the collegiate buildings, but the residential buildings also were four-storeyed; their style of construction, of their exterior

[1]Cf. also *Life*, pp. 110–112; *Records*, II, p. 166 ff.; Heras, *JBORS*, XIV, 1928, pp. 1–28.

[2]Ghosh, A. and Kuraishi, M. H., quoted by Joshi; Sashi, H., Nālandā and its Epigraphic Material, *MASI*, 66, 1942, pp. 1–20; Sankalia, H. D., *The University of Nālandā*, Madras, 1934; cf. Mookerji, R. K., *Ancient Indian Education*, pp. 559–63.

[3]*Life*, pp. 111–12.

projections being dragon-like with lower edges of roofs coloured, sculptured pillars and beautified and exuberant rows of balusters and parapets with covered copings it was a city complete in itself and may have attracted even princes to come to its precints.[1]

The description of Yuan Chwang is supported by an epigraph of the middle of the 8th century A.D. found from the site itself. We read in this inscription of Mālāda that king Bālāditya had erected a Buddhist temple at Nālandā "as if with a view to see Kailāśa mountain surpassed." Nālandā, which had scholars reputed for their knowledge of the scriptures and the arts (*āgama-kalā-vikhyāta-vidvadjanā*), was full of "the beams of the rays of the caityas shining and bright like white clouds." "She was mocking, as it were, at all the cities of the kings who had acquired wealth by tearing asunder the temples in hostile lands.

"Nālandā had a row of Vihāras, the line of whose tops touched the clouds. That (row of Vihāras) was, so to say, the beautiful festoon of the earth, made by the creator, which looked resplendent in going upwards.

"Its temples were made brilliant on account of the network of the rays of the various jewels set in them and was the pleasant abode of the learned and the virtuous Saṁgha and resembled Sumeru, the charming residence of the noble Vidyādharas."[2]

Richness of Human and Material Resources of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra

The hugeness of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra is also obvious from the fact that according to the biographer of Yuan Chwang the number of its alumni 'always' reached the figure of 10,000 counting "the priests belonging to the convent or strangers residing therein",[3] though from Yuan Chwang himself and I-tsing the strength seems to have been between 3,000 and 4,000[4]—still a staggering figure for an ancient religious-cum-educational institution. If Hwui-Li is to be believed out of the total number of 10,000 monks, as many as 1510 were teachers—1,000, who could explain twenty collections of the sūtras and śāstras; 500, who could explain thirty collections and 10 who could explain fifty collections. The Mahāvihāra provided all

[1]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 71 f.
[2]*MASI*, No. 66, p. 79.
[3]*Life*, p. 112.
[4]I-tsing, *Record*, p. 154; Beal, *Records*, II, p. 170.

its alumni free of cost their four requisites of clothes, food, bedding and medicine.

But that is not all. The standard of living of the Nālandā monks was very impressive and proves that the monastery possessed immense wealth and resources. Yuan Chwang reports that before entering the Mahāvihāra he was given a refreshment in a farm-house of the monastery. Then he was lodged in the monastery built by Bālādityarāja where he was entertained by Buddhabhadra for seven days. Subsequently he lived in the abode of Dharmapāla. Here he was served each day with 120 jambiras (a fruit), twenty areca nuts, twenty nutmegs, an ounce of camphor, and a peck of the finest variety of rice called Mahāśāli which grew only in Magadha and nowhere else. It was "as large as the black bean" and when cooked was "aromatic and shining like no other rice at all." Besides these provisions "every month he was presented with three measures of oil, and, daily, a supply of butter and other things according to his needs." Besides, he was provided with two menial servants and a riding elephant. Significantly, it is said that the Head of the Mahāvihāra entertained "a myriad priests after this fashion."[1]

Evidence of I-tsing on the Richness of Buddhist Monasteries

The richness of the possessions and landed property of the vihāras in the seventh century making them self-supporting units is also attested by I-tsing.[2] Regarding the arrangement of the property of a deceased monk he specifies: "Land, houses, shops, bed-gear, woollen seats, and iron or copper implements are not distributable. Among those last named, however, large or small iron bowls, small copper bowls, door-keys, needles, gimlets, razors, knives, iron ladles, braziers, axes, chisels, etc., together with their bags; earthen utensils, i.e. bowls, smaller bowls, kuṇḍikas (pitchers) for drinking and for cleansing water, oil-pots and water-basins are distributable; the rest are not. Wooden and bamboo implements, leather bedding, shaving things; male and female servants; liquor, food, corn; lands and houses, are all to be made the property of the priests assembling from every quarter. Among these, things which are movable are to be kept in storehouses, and to be used by the assembly. Lands, houses, village-gardens, buildings, which are immovable, become also

[1] *Life*, p. 109 f.
[2] I-tsing, *Record*, Ch. XXXVI.

the property of the assembly. If there remain clothes or anything wearable, whether cloaks, bathing-shirts, dyed or undyed, or water-proofs, pots, slippers, or shoes, they are to be distributed on the spot to the priests then assembled. A garment which has one pair of sleeves cannot be divided, but a white garment which is made double may be divided as one likes . . . Quadrupeds, elephants, horses, mules, asses for riding, are to be offered to the Royal Household. Bulls and sheep should not be distributed, but belong to the whole assembly. Such goods as helmets, coats of arms, etc., are also to be sent to the Royal Houshold. Miscellaneous weapons, after having been made into needles, gimlets, knives, or heads for metal staffs, are distributed among the priests then assembled. If not sufficient for all the priests, the elders alone may take them.

"Things such as nets are made into network for windows. Paints of good quality, such as yellow, vermillion, azure, blue, green, are sent to the temple to be used for colouring images and the ornaments around.

"White and red earth and inferior blue substances are distributed to the assembled priests. The wine if it is nearly sour is to be buried in the ground, and when it has turned into vinegar the priests may use it. But if it remains sweet it must be thrown away, but it must not be sold . . . Medical substances are to be kept in a consecrated (lit. 'pure') store, to be supplied to sick persons when needed. Precious stones, gems and the like are divided into two portions, one being devoted to pious objects (Dhammika), the other to the priests' own use (Saṅghika). The former portion is spent in copying the scriptures and in building or decorating the 'Lion Seat'. The other portion is distributed to the priests who are present. Things such as chairs inlaid with jewels are to be sold, and (the receipts) are to be given to those present.

"Wooden chairs are to be made common property. But the scriptures and their commentaries should not be parted with, but be kept in library to be read by the members of the Order. Non-Buddhistic books are to be sold, and (the money acquired) should be distributed among the priests then resident. If deeds and contracts are payable at once, (the money is) to be realised and to be immediately distributed; if they are not payable at once, the deeds should be kept in the treasury and when they fall due, (the money) should be devoted to the use of the Assembly. Gold, silver, wrought or unwrought goods, shells (cowrie, Kapardaka), and coins, are

divided into three portions, for the Buddha, for Religion (Dharma), and for the Priesthood (Saṅgha). The portion for the Buddha is spent in repairing the temple, stūpas that contain holy hair or nails, and other ruins. The portion belonging to Religion is used for copying the scriptures and building or decorating the 'Lion Seat'. Another portion belonging to the Assembly is distributed to the resident priests."[1]

At another place I-tsing relates: "In all the Indian monasteries the clothing of a Bhikshu is supplied out (of the common funds) of the resident priests. The produce of the farms and gardens, and the profits arising from trees and fruits, are distributed annually in shares to cover the cost of clothing. . . . The Indian monasteries possess special allotments of land, from the produce of which the clothing of the priests is to be supplied. . . . The priestly garments must be supplied out of the common property of the resident priests, and anything such as bed-clothes, etc., must be equally distributed, but not be given to an individual only; thus church property should be guarded by them more carefully than their own possessions."[2]

Apart from making land grants and endowments kings also took care to upkeep them. The clepsydrae which were regularly used in the Indian monasteries were supplied by the kings together with some boy servants to watch and announce the hours.[3] Sometimes the endowments and provisions exceeded the needs of the monasteries so that they could have great wealth, granaries full of rotten corn, many servants, male and female, money and treasures hoarded in the treasury.[4]

Feudalisation as the Cause of the Emergence of Monasteries as Self-Supporting Economic Units

The emergence of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra (and also other vihāras and Brāhmaṇical temples) as self-supporting economic units was actually one of the incidental results of the feudalisation of the state structure and administrative organisation of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.[5] The early Pali texts refer to the villages donated to the Brāhmaṇas by the rulers of Kosala and Magadha, but they do

[1]I-tsing, *Record*, pp. 190–92.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 193 f.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 144.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 194.
[5]Goyal, S. R., *HIG*, p. 295.

not refer to the delegation of administrative rights by the donors. In the Gupta period the rulers not only surrendered police and administrative rights over the lands granted by them, they also gave up control over almost all sources of revenue including pasturage, hides, mines for production of salt, forced labour and all hidden treasures and deposits.[1] Commenting on the term *brahmadeya*, Buddhaghosha, who flourished in the fifth century A.D., states that the *brahmadeya* grant carried with it judicial administrative rights.[2] It was indeed a very significant development. Of the seven organs of the state power mentioned in literature, taxation system and coercive power were rightly regarded as two vital elements. If they were delegated, the state disintegrated. This was actually the position created by the grants made to the Brāhmaṇas and monasteries. As a result of this process the monasteries and temples developed as semi-independent areas enjoying immunities on religious grounds, and were gradually transformed into medieval *mathas*.[3]

"The accounts of Fa-hsien and I-tsing leave no doubt that the monasteries got their lands cultivated by temporary tenants. I-tsing gives some idea about the nature of the tenure on which the cultivators were assigned land. He states that the *Saṅgha* provided the bulls and fields, and generally received one-sixth of the produce. I-tsing does not indicate whether the cultivators were also provided with ploughs, seeds, manure and other equipment for agriculture. It seems that the tillers of the soil were not hired labourers receiving wages, as in former times, but were semi-serfs or temporary tenants paying rental to the landowners. If a temple or a monastery was the landowner, it had no payment to make to the state."[4]

By the middle of the 8th century serfdom became fairly common, as is attested by the following extracts from a Chinese account of 732 A.D. quoted by R. S. Sharma[5]:

"According to the law of the Five Indies, from the king, the royal consort and the princes down to the chiefs and their wives all build monasteries separately in accordance with their respective capacities and abilities. Each of them builds his own temple, but

[1]Sharma, S. R., *Indian Feudalism*, p. 2 ff.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 46

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]Jan Run-Hua, 'Hui Chao's Record on Kashmir', *Kashmir Research Biannual*, No. 2 (1962), pp. 119-120, quoted by R. S. Sharma in *Indian Feudalism*, p. 58 f.

does not construct it jointly. They say when each person has one's own meritorious virtues, what is the necessity of joint effort ?

"Whenever a monastery is built, village and its folk are immediately offered to support the Three Precious Ones. Merely building a monastery without making any donation of a village and its folk is not done. This is followed as an example by the foreign countries. The king, the queen and royal consorts have their respective villages and their folk. Donation is free and the king is not asked for that. This also applies in case of building a temple. When it is necessary to build a temple they build it and the king is not asked. The king dare not obstruct; he is afraid lest it should infect him with sins.

"As to rich commoners, though they have no villages to donate, they try their best to build temples and manage these by themselves. Whenever they obtain things, they offer them to the Three Precious Ones. As in the Five Indians (*sic.*), no human being is sold; so there are no female slaves. Villages and their inhabitants could be donated if wanted and necessary."

From this account it is obvious "that the practice of donating villages along with their inhabitants to the monasteries by kings, queens, princes and chiefs was as common as that of building them by these dignitaries. There was no dearth of donations because not only the kings and queens but also the princes and chiefs possessed their own villages and village folk whom they could dispose of freely. Princes and lesser chiefs probably received grants for their maintenance from their superior lord, but were apparently free to make a religious gift of their land with the men working on it. Obviously the inhabitants were bound to serve the donors as long as they lived under them and to serve the beneficiaries when they were transferred to the latter.

For the feudal rights enjoyed by the Nālandā Mahāvihāra evidence is provided by the Chinese sources. Hwui-li, the biographer of Yuan Chwang; records that the king of the country (probably the local ruler of Magadha, or Harshavardhana) had remitted the revenues of about 100 villages (the number had increased to 200 by the time of I-tsing), for the endowment of the convent. Two hundred householders of these villages, day by day, contributed several hundred piculs (1 picul=133½ lbs.) of rice and several hundred catties (1 catty=160 lbs.) of butter and milk.[1] In the same way clothes, food,

[1]*Life*, p. 112 f.

beds and medicines were supplied to the inmates.[1]

In the seventh century lavish endowments were made to the Nālandā Mahāvihāra by kings Pūrṇavarman (probably a Maukhari ruler), Harsha, Bhāskaravarman and probably Aṁśuvarman of Nepal.[2] Seals of two Maukhari kings and of Bhāskaravarman have been found at Nālandā. Pūrṇavarman is said to have presented to Nālandā a figure of the Buddha standing upright and made of copper, 80 feet high. He also constructed a pavilion of six stages to cover it. Harsha is usually identified with the king of Mid-India who is mentioned by Yuan Chwang as the builder of one of the largest monasteries there. The construction of the boundary wall around the whole establishment has also been attributed to him. The construction of a large brass monastery by him was still going on when Yuan Chwang visited Nālandā.

Royal Interference in the Affairs of the Mahāvihāra

Though Buddhist monasteries were organised and administered on democratic lines according to the laws of Vinaya, and enjoyed internal autonomy, yet the feudalisation of these institutions and their emergence as self-sufficient economic units tended to politicalise their administration. As pointed out by R. S. Sharma, "the issue of seals by Nālandā villages, which glorify themselves as *janapadas*" indicates that "they were emerging as politically independent and economically self-sufficient units."[3] The same may be said of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra itself. This development was bound to attract apprehensive attention of the rulers. It was also but natural for kings who gave lavish grants and endowments to the monasteries (and temples) to see to it that they behaved in a proper manner.[4] Harsha himself is said to have "brought the Brethren together for examination and discussion, giving rewards and punishments according to merit and demerit. Those Brethren who kept the rules of their Order strictly and were thoroughly sound in theory and practice he advanced to the Lion's Throne (that is, promoted to the highest place) and from these he received religious instruction; those who, though perfect in the observance of the ceremonial code,

[1] *Ibid.*, and n. 3.

[2] Heras, H., 'The Royal Patrons of the University of Nālandā', *JBORS*, XIV, 1928.

[3] Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[4] *Ibid.*

were not learned in the past, he merely honoured with formal reverence; those who neglected the ceremonial observances of the Order, and whose immoral conduct was notorious, were banished from his presence and from the country."[1] King Kumāra of Kāmarūpa threatened Śīlabhadra, the Head of the Mahāvihāra, that he would demolish the institution in case his request for dispatching Yuan Chwang was not complied with. In Kashmir also, the ruler of that kingdom is seen appointing some score of monks headed by Bhadanta Yaśa from among the monks to help Yuan Chwang when the latter stayed there.[2]

Emergence of Organised Corporate Education System

The transformation of the organisation of the Buddhist monasteries on feudal lines changed the pattern of Buddhist education also. Education in early India was in the hands of private teachers. Even the famous 'University' of Takshaśilā was not an organised institution. In fact it was simply a centre of education where every teacher was an institution by himself. Organised education was first evolved in India in the Buddhist monasteries which developed into educational institutions from the time of Aśoka onwards. As remarked by A. S. Altekar[3] they were the Buddhist counterparts of the Brāhmaṇical *gurukulas* where *guru* was the head not of a family but of a monastery. But in the earlier period of their history education in monasteries was intended for monks and nuns only. However with the feudalisation of the monastic life and economy, the monasteries emerged as organised or corporate centres of higher learning where education was imparted not only to the monks and nuns but to the general people also. Nālandā Mahāvihāra was the foremost of such institutions. The emergence of the Brāhmaṇical *agrahāra* villages and temples as centres of learning was the Hindu counterpart of the feudalisation of education system. The early medieval temple colleges at Salotgi, Ennāriram, Tirumukkuda, Tiruvorriyur, Malakapuram and many other places and also the Kadiyur Agrahāra, the Sarvajñapura Agrahāra etc. described by A.S. Altekar were big corporate educational institutions which had their own land and buildings, paid regular salaries to their teachers and sometimes even gave maintenance allowance to students. They

[1]*Travels*, I, p. 344.
[2]*Life*, p. 69.
[3]Altekar, A. S., *Education in Ancient India*, 1957, p. 75.

could not come into existence without the feudal land grants and endowments. The tradition of these temples and agrahāras was continued by the *maṭhas* of the early medieval *āchāryas*. The feudalised Buddhist monasteries of the Gupta and post-Gupta period, may, therefore, be regarded as the forerunners of these later corporate educational institutions. In the words of S. Dutt they "partook of the character of the *studium generale* of mediaeval Europe, and from the fifth or sixth century onwards, several of them were organized as universities and functioned as such."[1] The fame of Nālandā and other Buddhist universities spread over the greater part of Asia through the works and achievements of the eminent scholars they produced. The Nālandā University remained a source of attraction to the foreign Buddhists even to its last day. It was the greatest centre for the study of Buddhist logic and Mahāyāna philosophy. Sanskrit was the medium of instruction here. It had a wide academic outlook and grammar (*Vyākaraṇa*), logic (*Hetuvidyā*), and idealism (*Vijñānavāda*), besides other branches of humanities and sciences, were taught with zeal and devotion. The scholars produced by Nālanda were treated with consideration and its professors were held in respect throughout Asia. Under the Pālas who were devout Buddhists, the glory of Nālandā as a centre of learning was maintained for several centuries at a high level.

Some other Buddhist Universities

In western India the greatest Buddhist educational centre was at Valabhī, the capital of the kingdom of the Maitrakas. I-tsing informs us that its fame rivalled with that of Nālandā. There were about a hundered Buddhist monastries at the place in c. 640 A.D. They accomodated six thousand students. The famous Buddhist scholars Sthiramati and Guṇamati were the leading lights of the University in the middle of the 7th century A.D. Like Nālandā, Valabhī also was not exclusively Buddhist centre of learning. Even Brāhmaṇas from the distant Gangetic plain used to send their sons to that place for higher education. The establishment received considerable support from the merchants and also from the Maitraka kings (c. 480–775 A.D.). The Maitrakas gave grants for the purpose of meeting the general expenses of the University as also for strengthening its library.[2]

[1]Dutt, S., in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 193.
[2]Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

Vikramaśilā

Vikramaśilā (also spelt as Vikramaśīlia)[1] monastery, established by king Dharmapāla in the 8th century, was a famous centre of international learning for more than four centuries. The continuous tradition of high scholarship that was maintained at Vikramaśilā throughout its history deserves admiration. The most famous in the galaxy of Vikramaśilā scholars was undoubtedly Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna, commonly known as Upādhyāya Atīsa, who lived in the 11th century A.D. In the 12th century there were 3,000 monk scholars at Vikramaśilā. Its administrative management was presided over by the Chief-Abbot. Grammar, logic, metaphysics, Tantras and ritualism were the main subjects specialised at the University.[2] It was destroyed by the Muslim invaders in 1203.[3]

Odantapurī and Jagadalla Vihāra

Buddhism continued to be strong in Bengal and Bihar till the beginning of the 13th century. Other monasteries in the region like those at Odantapurī and Jagadalla Vihāra (founded by king Rāmapāla at his capital Rāmāvatī)[4] were also famous centres of education spreading the holy knowledge both in India and abroad.

Jayendra Vihāra of Kashmir

The Jayendra Vihāra of Kashmir was also an important Centre of Buddhist learning. It attracted such famous scholars as Kumārajīva and Yuan Chwang who came here for study and a large number of scholars went from here to Tibet, China and Central Asia for the propagation of Buddhism.[5]

The contribution of Buddhism to the cause of Indian learning and education was, thus, indeed very great.

[1]Vide, S. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 117, n. 1.

[2]Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

[3]The ruins of Vikramaśilā have been excavated at the village Antichak in Bhagalpur district (vide Saran, S. C., 'Vikramaśilā Monastery—a Centre of Tāntricism', in *K.P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, Patna, 1981, p. 117 ff.).

[4]Dutt, S., *op. cit.*, p. 192.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 132; Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

Chapter 19

BUDDHIST LITERATURE AND ART

Contribution to Indian Languages and Literatures

The contribution of Buddhism to the various aspects of Indian culture has been truly remarkable. We have already discussed in Chapter 14 the problem whether or not Buddhism represents a separate culture or the dominant aspect of ancient Indian culture. Our view is that Buddhism does not represent a separate culture; it does not represent even the most dominant aspect of ancient Indian culture. It is, however, certainly one of the most significant aspects of the culture of our country. In the next four Chapters we have discussed the contribution of Buddhism to ancient Indian social, political and historical thought and system of education. From these Chapters it is obvious that what Buddhism did or sought to do was a modification in the traditional or orthodox patterns of thought; it did not try to bring about revolutionary changes or a break from the past.

Language and Literature of Early Buddhism

Regarding the language which the Buddha used for his gospel, there has been a continuous debate. One thing is, however, certain: he spoke in a non-Sanskrit language and asked his followers to use the local dialects in the propagation of religion. This resulted in the flowering of non-Sanskrit languages in a very short span of time. According to the Theravādins, the Buddha himself used Māgadhī dialect as the medium of his teachings and the Pali language, in which the canon of the Theravāda has come down to us, is the same as the Māgadhī language used by the Buddha. Thus the Theravāda claims that its canon represents the oldest Buddhist canon and that the Pali *Piṭakas* are older than any other version of the teachings of the Master. But it must be remembered that the linguistic features of Pali differ in important respects from those of Māgadhī. Besides, as the Buddha was against the idea of the sanctity of a particular language or dialect, it may be concluded that "the original teachings of the

Master must have been learnt, retained, and developed in different dialects by the Buddhists of different provinces. In other words, more than one version of the Buddha's teachings may have already come into existence by the time of the Council of Vaiśālī."[1] Most probably the Mahāsāṁghikas brought out a separate edition of the teachings of the Buddha dividing their scriptures into five collections as against that of the Theravāda which had made three divisions. Both these sects must have drawn their scriptures from the original common heritage of the Buddha's words. Many parts of the *Mūla-sarvāstivāda-vinaya-piṭaka* in Sanskrit were discovered in Gilgit which have been published. In the seventh century of the Christian era, I-tsing found that the *Piṭakas* of Sthaviravāda, Mahāsāṁghika and Mūlasarvāstivāda all had an equal volume of three lacs of *ślokas*, but the *Piṭakas* of Sammitīya sect consisted of two lac *ślokas*. He took with him copies of the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* and translated it into Chinese. Yuan Chwang found in India five redactions of the Vinaya-piṭaka belonging to Dharmagupta, Mahiśāsaka, Kāśyapīya, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṁghika schools. These *Vinayas* were, perhaps, in Sanskrit, Prakrit and other north Indian dialects. According to Vinītadeva (c. A.D. 800), the scriptures of the Sarvāstivāda were in Sanskrit, of the Mahāsāṁghika in Prakrit, of the Sammitīya in Apabhraṁśa, and of the Sthaviravāda in Paiśāchī. Śāntideva (c. 700 A.D.) has quoted in his *Śikshāsamuchchaya* many Sanskrit texts such as *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, *Boddhisattva-Piṭaka*, *Śrāvakavinaya*, etc. Most of the literature of these early Buddhist sects has disappeared in its original form. Tibetan and Chinese translations of *Tripiṭakas* and their Central Asian fragments, however, prove that this literature existed at one time. "It will, therefore, be erroneous to suppose that the Pāli *piṭakas* in their present form are older than all Buddhist books in Sanskrit and mixed Sanskrit; part of the Sanskrit *Mahāvastu* may be regarded as old as the fourth century B.C. Likewise, the fragments of Sanskrit canon and the '*Gāndhāri*' *Dharmapada* in their original form may be of pre-Aśokan date. The Pāli *Tipiṭaka*, according to Ceylonese tradition, was reduced to writing in the first century B.C. in the reign of King Vaṭṭa Gāmaṇī of Ceylon. The inscriptions of Aśoka (Bhābrū Edict) and those on the Stūpas at Sāñcī and Bharhut prove the existence of some Buddhist books and parts of the *piṭakas* in the third and second

[1] *Buddhism*, ed. by K. L. Seshagiri Rao, p. 10.

centuries before Christ. That many Buddhist scriptures in Pāli, Prākṛit and Sanskrit were in existence in written form before the first century of the Christian era need not be doubted. Buddhist literature in India went on increasing in volume and variety till the twelfth century, whereas the earliest *suttas* were compiled and recited in the year of Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāṇa*."[1]

Besides the canonical literature in Pali, there is also the non-canonical literature, consisting of the *Milinda Pañho* containing a conversation between Nāgasena and Milinda or Menander, an Indo-Greek ruler of the second century B.C., the *Nettipakaraṇa* and *Peṭakopadesa* (ascribed to Mahākachchāyana, a disciple of the Buddha but evidently a later work), Buddhadatta's Manuals of Vinaya and Abhidhamma, commentaries on the Pali Tripiṭaka texts, including the Jātakas, written by or ascribed to Buddhaghosha or Dhammapāla, Ceylonese chronicles such as the *Dipavaṁsa* and the *Mahāvaṁsa*, and later works in Pali. Buddhaghosha's treatise, the *Visuddhimagga*, is veritably a small encyclopaedia on early Buddhism.[2] He also wrote extensive commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathās*) on the books of Tripiṭaka. The *Mahāvastu* is claimed to be a book on Vinaya belonging to the Lokottaravādins, but its subject-matter is extremely varied. The *Lalitavistara* is an incomplete biography of the Buddha. Asvaghosha is known for his *Buddhacharita* and *Saundarananda* and Āryaśūra for his *Jātakamālā*, a Sanskrit text, corresponding to the Pali *Chāriyāpiṭaka*. There is also a vast *Avadāna* literature corresponding to the Pali *Apadānas*.[3]

Contribution of Mahāyāna and Tāntrika Buddhism to Literature

The Mahāyāna Buddhism also produced quite extensive and varied literature and much of it has been lost for ever. Whatever is available is in mixed Sanskrit. It can be divided into two classes: *Sūtras* or texts attributed to the Buddha and traditionally believed to contain the original *Buddhavachana*; and the *Śāstras* or treatises by the Buddhist sages and authors. The *Śāstras* include commentaries on the original *sūtras* as well as original works. The earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras* are the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. There are many *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*; the largest is of one hundred thousand

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 10 f.; cf. also Bhikshu, Sangharakshita, in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. by A. L. Basham, p. 89.

[2] Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 138.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

ślokas, Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpārmitāsūtra; the smallest of them is the *Prajñāpāramitā hṛdayasūtra*. Among the Mahāyānist sūtras, nine texts or *Navadharmas* are regarded as the most important. They are: the *Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, the *Lalitavistra*, the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the *Tathāgataguhyaka*, the *Samādhirāja* and the *Daśabhūmika*. These are called the *Vaipulyasūtras*. Hardly less famous are the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*, the *Amitāyussūtra* and the *Karaṇḍavyūha*. Besides the Prajñāpāramitā texts and the *Navadharmas*, there are numerous other Mahāyāna sūtras preserved in Tibetan and Chinese translations. The *Mahāvyutpatti* (900 A.D.) gives a list of 105 Mahāyāna sūtras; the *Śikshāsamuchchaya* of Śāntideva quotes extracts from about 110 *Mahāyāna sūtras*; Nāgārjuna in his *Sūtrasamuchchaya* gives the names of 60 *Mahāyānasūtras*. The Mahāyāna philosophers and authors produced an enormous mass of literature. Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Chandrakīrtti, Śāntideva, Maitreyanātha, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were notable authors of philosophical works of Mahāyāna. Diṅnāga (600 A.D.) founded a new critical school of Buddhist philosophy. Epistemology, logic and dialectics dominated the history of this school. He heralded the age of great doctrinal controversies between the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical philosophies. Dharmakīrtti was perhaps the greatest Buddhist logician (700 A.D.). The school of Buddhist logicians continued to flourish till the eleventh century A.D. Śāntirakshita wrote the monumental critique of all systems of Indian philosophy of the age, the *Tattvasaṁgraha*, in the eighth century. His pupil Kamalaśīla's *Pañjikā* on this work is also a very important contribution. The works of Dharmottara, Vinītadeva, Śaṁkarānanda, Haribhadra. Ratnakīrtti, Jñānaśrimitra, etc. belong to the last phase of Mahāyāna in India.

The Tantras are the most esoteric of the Buddhist texts. In Tibet there is found a large collection of translations of Indian Buddhist texts numbering more than 4,500. These are divided into two groups, namely, Bkanḥgyur, popularly called the Kanjur, consisting of 1,108 texts, and Bstanḥgyur, popularly called the Tanjur, consisting of 3,458 texts. Similarly there exists a large number of translations from Indian texts into the Chinese language. In his Catalogue, Bunyiu Nanjio records 1,662 texts while Hobogirin, a later Catalogue, mentions as many as 2,184 texts printed in fifty-five volumes. In another 25 volumes, there are supplementary texts, written in China and Japan. In the Manchurian language also there is a translation

of the same, and in Mongolian, a translation of the Tibetan Tanjur.[1] At one time there was a vast Buddhist literature in Pali, the Prakrits, mixed Sanskrit and pure Sanskrit. But "not a single Buddhist work, with the exception of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, has been found within the borders of India"[2] probably because with the passage of time or through desecration of and vandalism in the monasteries, innumerable manuscripts were destroyed. The Buddhist literature that we study today has come to us from monasteries outside India, in Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Nepal, and in translations from Tibet, China and Mongolia. An idea of the vastness of this literature can be formed from the works mentioned in the above mentioned Chinese and Tibetan Catalogues.[3] It can also not be denied that in India the development of Pali was almost wholly due to Buddhism. The Pali authors were also first to write traditional histories. The output of Buddhist Sanskrit authors was also second only to that of the Brāhmaṇical authors. The numerous works on Abhidharma, the Vinayas of so many Buddhist schools, the Prajñāpāramitāsūtras, hundreds of Mahāyāna sūtras and philosophical treatises and commentaries are in Sanskrit. The history of Buddhist literature from c. 200 B.C. to c. 1200 A.D. is an essential and important part of the growth of Sanskrit literature.[4] The first dramatist in the history of Sanskrit literature was the Buddhist poet Aśvaghosha. Āryaśūra, another Buddhist poet, was among the forerunners of classical Sanskrit poetry. Buddhist poets also contributed much to the composition of hymns of praise (*stotras*, *stavas*, *stutis*) in Sanskrit. The contribution of the Buddhists to the study of psychology, Sanskrit grammar and lexicography was also quite significant.

Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Art[5]

Meaning and Content of Indian Art

An important aspect of the history of Buddhism in India is its manifestation in art and architecture. In order to appreciate the contribution of Buddhism to the growth of Indian art it must be realized that it is a part of the larger heritage of Indian art, the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 141.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 141.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] This section on Buddhist art has been written by Dr. S. K. Gupta, Associate Professor, Rajasthan University, Jaipur.

inner meaning of which cannot be understood without understanding the background of Indian religious symbolism. As pointed out by Aurobindo "The whole basis of Indian artistic creation, perfectly conscious and recognised in the canons, is directly spiritual and intuitive."[1] "The theory of ancient Indian art at its greatest", he further states, "is of another kind. Its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine to the regard of the soul, the Self through its expressions, the Infinite through its living symbols, the Divine through his powers. ... A seeing in the self accordingly becomes the characteristic method of the Indian artist. ... One may well say that beyond the ordinary cultivation of the aesthetic instinct necessary to all artistic appreciation there is a spiritual insight or culture needed if we are to enter into the whole meaning of Indian artistic creation."[2] That is why art historians such as E. B. Havell, A. K. Coomaraswamy and V. S. Agrawala have tried to study Indian art as a pictorial representation of India's metaphysical wisdom, as expression of deep religious experience of our ancients, sermons in stone on oneness of all things in the Universal Spirit.[3]

Buddhist Art is a Part of Larger Legacy of Indian Art : its Symbolic Nature

The Buddist art of ancient India was no exception to what has been said above, specially so because originally Buddhism was an other-worldly ascetic religion with no place for fine arts in its thinking. Rather, from the *Brahmajāla sutta* and the *Pātimokkha sutta* it is obvious that it regarded arts and crafts as unworthy of those who seek ultimate liberation. It had, therefore, to express itself through the language of symbols which are mostly those which had been popular in the pre-Buddhist, that is the Vedic age. Some of them had universal value. Generally such symbols were associated with the cult of fertility and mother-goddess. Among these are included *purṇa-ghaṭa* (full-vase), *svastika, śrīvatsa, nandyāvarta* (spiral), *nandipada* (bull-head) and *chakra* (wheel). The second type of symbols also came from the remote past, but they were accorded a new significance in Buddhism. For example, in the pre-Buddhist period tree was worshipped as a symbol or abode of folk-deities; in

[1]Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Pondicherry, 1959, p. 227.
[2]*Ibid.*; pp. 238–40.
[3]Coomaraswamy, A. K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 90–1.

early Buddhism it was accepted but as the symbol of Buddhas themselves.[1] Similarly, old animal motifs such as elephant, bull, lion and horse were adopted by the Buddhists and at least two of them viz. elephant and lion became the symbol of the Buddha. The third type of symbols are those which were for the first time either executed or conceived by the Buddhists. In the first category of this type are included the motifs of the Gandharvas, Kinnaras etc. who were originally not associated with Buddhism but were accepted by the Buddhists as secondary deities or attendants to the Buddha as a result of the influence of the folk cults. The most important motif of the second category of this type is the motif of the Buddha in human form, the symbol of Enlightenment and Dhamma. From the point of view art it is a combination of different symbols. A Buddha is not merely an anthropomorphic figure seated in *yogāsana*. Only a figure seated in *yogāsana* on a *siṁhāsana*[2] under bodhi tree with *prabhāmandala* behind the head and bearing *mahāpurusha lakshaṇas* including *ūrṇā*, *ushṇīsha* and *chakra* on palms and soles may properly be called the image of the Buddha. All these motifs connected with the Buddha image have their independent meaning.

Artists who Created Buddhist Monuments were not Necessarily Buddhist

While assessing the contribution of Buddhism to Indian art, it must be appreciated that though a particular art antiquity or remain may be of Buddhist affiliation, it does not necessarily follow that it was created by Buddhist artists. In this respect India's religious art differs strikingly from her religious literature, for while the latter is the work of men with vocations---Brāhmaṇas, monks and ascetics—the former chiefly came from the hands of secular craftsmen. Such craftsmen, though they worked according to rigid canonical rules, were personally not necessarily the followers of the religion to which their creation belonged. Therefore, it will not be proper to presume that all the Buddhist antiquities and remains were the handiwork of the Buddhism-believing artists.

Use of Stone Introduced by the Buddhists

One of the main contribution of Buddhists to the history of Indian

[1]On the railings of Bharhut we find lables associating various Buddhas with particular trees.

[2]Vide, Gupta, S K., 'Lion Seat in Buddhist Art', *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of All India Archaeological Society*, Pune Session, pp. 253-7.

art is the use of stone in architecture. The Indian architecture of the the post-Indus pre-Maurya period was largely wooden; and it continued to remain so even after that. The rock cut caves of the Maurya period found at Barabar hill near Gayā were evidently a subsitute for a religious meeting place consisting of round thatched hut standing in a courtyard and their designer could not transcend the pattern to which he was used. Similar dependence on wooden models is evident in many other features of design until the Gupta period. Similarly the Great Stūpa of Sāñchī was originally enclosed by a wooden fence; later it was replaced by the massive stone balustrade which now surrounds the enlarged monument. The same process of wooden technique is manifest in the construction of its gateways (*toraṇas*). Thus, the use of stone in place of wood in religious architecture was a contribution of the Buddhists.

Architecture of Structural Monasteries

In the earlier period of the history of Buddhism the monastic dwellings were called *ārāma* (pleasure-garden), *saṅghārāma* (pleasure-garden donated to the *saṅgha*), or *vana* (forest or grove). The word *vihāra* derived from a verb meaning 'to pass time' denoted a wide range of structures, from a modest hut to a huge building or building-complex. The word *guhā* (cave) also came to denote a Buddhist monastery when rock cut dwellings for monks came in vogue.

In the earliest stages, monastery in the strict sense of the term did not exist. The word chāturddiśa saṅgha referred to the fellowship of all four quarters. The Buddha and his disciples led a literally homeless life. Only the *uposathā* meeting and the rain retreat occasioned the need for the erection of small huts at convenient places. The Veḷuvana (bamboo-grove) near Rājagṛha was donoted by Bimbisāra to the saṅgha for this purpose. It probably meant that the land became the property of the monastic community and the monks could use it as they saw fit. There was probably no building on the site but in later period a building bearing the same name was built there. The Ambapālivana of Vaiśālī, donated by Āmrapāli and the Jetavana of Śrāvastī donated by Anāthapiṇḍika, are instances of the same type. But the excavation in 1953–59 of Jīvakārāma site, donated by the physician Jīvaka has revealed a pebble base on which stood buildings probably of wood, including a spacious hall with apsidal end on either side, and, pro-

bably also kitchens and granaries.[1] The hall may have been a common dwelling place of the monks.

However, soon after a change occurred in the monastic way of life. With the passage of time it became the practice for the monks to return to the same place at the beginning of the rainy season. Moreover the make-shift structures used during the retreat gave way to more durable buildings. Further, the Order acquired fixed properties in the form of lands and buildings and also simpler things donated by villagers. All this necessitated a change in the architecture of monasteries. Now, with the assembly-hall store houses, kitchens, wells, baths, *chaṅkramaṇa* places etc., also became necessary. Remains of such early structural vihāras belonging to the centuries both preceding and succeeding the Christian era have been found, though in most instances it is only the foundations that can be traced now, needing no special mention here.[2]

In the early medieval period one finds a new type of monastery at Nālandā. It is called Mahāvihāra, the great monastery because it consisted of several smaller vihāras. The vihāras which stand facing west in a straight line consist of a frontage of 50 to 60 m. enclosed by solid brick walls from 2 to 3 m. in thickness. A corridor or varandah with pillars runs around all the four sides of the inner yard. Round the corridor stand rows of cells. In the courtyard there is no *maṇḍapa*. Instead there are wells in some cases and in others there are ovens, rostrums for preaching or a subsidiary shrine. The shrine invariably occupies the central cell in the back row. To the west of these vihāras is a row of big shrines facing east. It is not possible to surmise the original shape of these shrines. The description of the Nālandā monasteries as left by Yuan Chwang has been recorded in this work elsewhere.

Art of Excavating Caves : The Chaitya Halls

The art of excavating caves in hills was an original contribution of of the Buddhists. It required great improvement in the technology of cutting rocks, for the stone of the western ghats, where majority of such monuments are found, is much harder than the sandstone of Chunar which was used by Aśoka for his pillars. How much planning and hard work must have gone into the process of the excavation of

[1] *Indian Archaeology : A Review*, 1953-54, 1954-55, 1957-58, 1958-59, New Delhi.

[2] *AIU*, p. 502.

these caves (which in later periods also involved carving of big votive stūpas and sculptures with minute details) can only be imagined today. But despite these difficulties what the artists of these monuments accomplished is usually of unsurpassable grandeur.

The rock cut architecture of the Buddhists consists of two types —the chaitya hall, that is the shrine proper and the saṅghārāma or vihāra i.e. the monastery. A chaitya hall is a long spacious hall with high ceilings, divided by pillars into a nave and an aisle on both sides. The end of the hall, usually apsidal, has a chaitya, surrounded by enough free space for circumbulation. This plan, however, developed in a long time. The history of the such caves starts with Aśoka, and with monuments not necessarily connected with Buddhism. The idea of getting such rocks excavated occurred to him when as a prince he visited some Buddhist monks living in the natural rock shelter of Budhani in M.P., as is now known from his inscription found in one of rock shelters of Pangoraria. He probably got some minor work done in them such as hewing out some benches etc. to make them more comfortable. When he became king he got some caves excavated for the Ājīvikas at Barabar near Gayā in Bihar which are perhaps the earliest excavated caves having some association with the development of chaitya halls of later days. The Sudāmā cave excavated by him consists of two apartments of which the outer one is rectangular (*maṇḍapa* of later days) and beyond this, at the back and separated from it by a solid wall with a narrow passage connecting the two, there is an empty circular chamber in the place usually occupied in other such caves by a votive chaitya. The outer chamber is covered by a barrel vault and the inner by a hemi-spherical dome. The most important of the Barabar group is the unfinished Lomaśa ṛshi cave, undated but obviously Mauryan. It resembles the Sudāmā cave in plan with the only exception that the inner chamber is oval instead of being circular. Its doorway consists of a smaller rectangular opening narrower at the upper end and separated from the roof by a semi-circular panel with a frieze of elephants in low relief worshipping a stūpa.

The next stage of evolution of chaitya caves is found in the circular chaitya hall at Junnār and a chaitya cave at Bhājā near Poona with twenty-seven pillars running along the entire length of the apsidal hall and around the votive chaitya. Further evolution of the excavated chaitya caves may be traced through a series of monuments such as at Ajanta (cave number IX), Bedsā, Nāsik, Kanheri,

Aurangabad, etc. to the most celebrated of all, the great chaitya hall at Kārle. The progress is marked by gradual emancipation from wooden conventions, greater elaboration of the different elements and features and richer and more variegated ornamentation of the facade (usually called the horse-shoe window). The caves no. XIX and XXVI of Ajanta and cave no. X at Ellora, known as the Viśvakarmā cave, represent the later examples of such chaitya halls and are marked by wealth of figure sculptures which are made to cover every possible space.

Excavated Monasteries

The monastery or vihāra was designed much on the same lines as a private house i.e. a square block formed by four rows of cells along the four sides of an inner quadrangle. The rock cut monasteries werealsosimilarly designed—a square or oblong central hall. preceded in front by a pillared varandah or vestibule and opening out on the other side into a number of square cells. The halls are usually provided with raised benches. Often the vihāra caves consist of several storeys and are not infrequently equipped with such things as cistern.

The history of the vihāra caves commences with the Barabar and Nāgārjuni caves of Aśoka and Daśaratha respectively. Leaving aside the Sudāmā and Lomaśa ṛshi caves, noticed in connection with the chaitya halls, the remaining caves of the two groups are simple rectangular chambers cut out of rock with a barrel-vaulted roof above. Some are provided with raised platforms at the end. The Son Bhandar cave at Rājgīr agrees essentially with this plan. The evolution of the vihāra caves may, however, be easily traced in the caves of western India—at Bhājā, Bedsā, Ajanta, Koṇḍāne, Pitalkhorā, Junnār, Nāsik etc. By the beginning of the Christian era the type was well-established. Further evolution of the vihāra caves may be seen at Ajanta, Ellora, Bāgh, Aurangabad, etc.

Art of Chaitya Monuments

Erecting mounds (*stūpas*) on the relics of great persons, kings and nobles was an ancient tradition. The word *stūpa* (Pali *thūbha*, Hindi *thūhā*) occurs in the *RV* where at one place the flaming piling up of Agni has been described as *stūpa*. At another place the word *hiraṇyastūpa* occurs which has been explained by V. S. Agrwala as a symbol of life principle as it exists in the individual and universe.[1]

[1]*Indian Art*, p. 120.

The original idea behind the word *stūpa* seems to have been 'piling up of a substance' (such as earth over the spot of *chitā*).[1] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* divides the burial mounts into rectangular and circular types.[2] The Jātakas also refer to the stūpas built on the remains of the deceased persons. The *Vinaya* mentions two chaityas where the Buddha stopped. No less than seven chaityas of Vaiśālī and one of Bhoganagara are mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta.* In the same texts Buddha directs his disciples thus: "At the crossing of four highways (*chatumahārājapathe*), similar to the stūpa they raise for a chakravarttī, they should raise a stūpa for the Tathāgata." It was probably that is why after his death, when his relics were divided into eight equal parts by Brāhmaṇa Droṇa and given to as many claimants, they all built stūpas on them. Droṇa himself built a stūpa on the pot (*Kumbha-stūpa*) in which the relics were collected after the funeral. Thus it is clear that the custom of rearing stūpas was pre-Buddhist. The Jainas also erected this form of memorial. But it must be conceded that the Buddhists particularly selected and adapted it to their needs and in course of time it acquired a special Buddhist association as containing the relic (*sarīra*) of the Master, or of his chief disciples, or as marking a spot associated with some important event in the life of the Buddha or in the history of Buddhism. Stūpas were also built on the *paribhoga dhātus* such as the garments, bowls, sticks etc. of the Buddha and Buddhist saints. As enshrining a relic representing the Buddha himself, a devotional aspect was also implicit from the very beginning and stūpas were also erected as votive objects.

According to Buddhist tradition Aśoka constructed 84,000 stūpas throughout the length and breadth of his empire. According to some it was Aśoka who gave a permanent architectural form to the stūpas.[3] But it is an unacceptable proposition, since we have the remains of the stūpa of the Śākyas at Piprāhwā which is no doubt a pre-Mauryan construction. However, most of the early extant stūpas, specially of Bharhut and Sāñchī, were originally constructed in the reign of Aśoka.

Nowhere in the early Buddhist literature do we find a description of the form or shape of the stūpa, except in the *Mahāvaṁsa* where

[1]Pande, C.B., *Mauryan Art*, Varanasi, 1982, p. 39.
[2]Kane, P.V., *HD*, IV, p. 247.
[3]Sarkar, H., *Studies in Early Buddhist Architecture of India*, p. 4.

the dome of the stūpa is compared with a water bubble. The earliest representation of the Buddha as a stūpa occurs on the arch of the facade of Lomaśa ṛshi cave which belongs to the Maurya period. Here a frieze of elephants is shown as worshipping a stūpa. On the remains of the Bharhut vedikā, stūpas are carved in two scenes—in one a stūpa (a full hemi-spherical dome which supports a *harmikā* surmounted by two parasols) is shown with śāla trees (obviously a depiction of the Mahāparinirvāṇa scene) and in another a stūpa is shown with two lotus flowers. The original form of the stūpa may be recognised in the Great Stūpa at Sāñchī. It consists of a hemi-spherical dome (*aṇḍa*) placed on a low circular base and surmounted by a square box (*harmikā*) which is further crowned by a parasol (*chhatra*). The dome is surrounded by a *pradakshiṇāpatha* (passage for circumbulation) and is fenced off by a railing or wall (*vedikā*) having four gateways (*toraṇas*) on the four sides, each projecting a little from the line of the railing

In the post-Aśokan centuries the stūpas show the tendencies of elevation and elongation of each component part so that they acquired the appearance of 'tower', a term by which the Chinese pilgrim usually designates them. The stūpa which acquired the greatest fame in Asia was the relic-tower built by Kanishka at Purushapura (Peshawar) Its total height is said to have been 638 feet. In the south the most important stūpas were at Amarāvatī, Bhaṭṭiprolu, Jaggayapeṭa, Ghaṇṭaśāla, Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, etc. They are richly carved and ornate and a special feature of them, not found elsewhere, is the use of the free standing slender pillars known as *āyaka-khambas* Of the later Indian stūpas the two most famous are those of Sarnath and Nālandā. The former acquired its present shape in the Gupta age and the later in the Pāla period.

Here it is interesting to note that in ancient India the Buddhists did not contribute anything towards the development of temple architecture. Though after the rise of Mahāyāna, they adopted image-worship and incorporated a number of Brāhmaṇical divinities, yet they never tried to copy Hindu temples. That always remained a point of difference between the two religions.

Sculpture : The Buddha Image

As shown by us elsewhere,[1] in early Buddhism the Buddha was not

[1]Gupta, S. K , 'Cause of the Absence of the Buddha Image in Early Indian Art', *K P Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, Patna, 1981, pp. 134-39.

represented in human form because of three factors :

1. The Buddha himself discouraged his worship in human form.
2. The Hīnayānists believed that after the Parinirvāṇa Buddha's *pūtikāya* (body of impure matter) could no more be visible.
3. The Buddha had himself taught that after his Parinirvāṇa Dhamma will be the Teacher.

In these circumstances in the early post-Buddha centuries it was neither possible nor proper for the Buddhists to depict the Buddha in human form. At that time the attitude of the Buddhists may have been that it is sacrilege to depict the Buddha in human form. He was, therefore, merely symbolized, the symbol being the Bodhi Tree, a stūpa, a foot-print, a lion, etc. The Buddha image was produced by the Mathurā and Gandhāra schools of sculptures at about the same time. Most Indian authorities now believe that the Buddha image originated at Mathurā; most earlier Europeans supported Gandhāra.[1] Some authorities even place the beginning of the Mathurā school in the first century B.C. In any case, both the schools must have been in existence under Kanishka I whose coins depict the Buddha in human form. But once the Buddha image became the vogue, it was welcomed by the laity in the spirit of sincere devotion. The view of scholars such as Foucher and Bacchofer that the inability of the Indian artists of the early Buddhist period was responsible for the absence of the Buddha image,[2] is not correct. As pointed out by Coomaraswamy the artists of the pre-Kushāṇa period were not incapable of representing the Buddha in human form. The Parkham, Dīdārganj and Patna images and the reliefs at Bharhut, Sāñchī and Bodha Gayā—where hundreds of anthropomorphic figures representing kings, yakshas, yakshīs, sages, warriors etc. are found—conclusively prove that the artists of the pre-Kushāṇa age could have no difficulty in depicting Gautama in human form, were they required to do so.[3] The absence of the representation of the Buddha in human form was actually in consonance with the earlier Vedic tradition which was characterised by the use of aniconic symbols and the absence of anthropomorphic images.

The worship of the Buddha in the form of images began when

[1]For the theory of the Indian origin of the Buddha image see S. K. Gupta, 'Early Buddha Images from Gandhāra : a Fresh Study in Genesis', *Readings in Indian History*, Jodhpur, 1978, pp. 166–78.

[2]Foucher, *The Beginning of Buddhist Art*, p. 120 ff.

[3]Coomaraswamy, 'Origin of Buddha Image', *The Art Bulletin*, IX, No. 4.

under Mahāyānist tendencies he was identified with Reality itself (*Dharmadhātu, Dharmakāya*). This reality is not only wisdom, it is compassion (*karuṇā*) also and assumes a human form (*Rūpakāya*) for the purposes of preaching the Dhamma. The Buddha image was, therefore, not a portrait but a symbol of the *Rūpakāya* of the Buddha. A mental image of the Buddha had been entertained before any other image had been made. In the words of Coomaraswamy one is 'to see the Buddha in the image rather than an image of the Buddha.'[1] According to V. S. Agrawala when the Vaishṇavas developed a psychological background and a religious emotion suitable for image worship, the Buddhists could not long remain unaffected.[2] Coomaraswamy believes that the pre-Kushāṇa Yaksha images provided the proto-type for the standing figures of the Bodhisattva.[3] Later on Lohuizen[4] and Agrawala[5] expressed agreement with this view. But as shown by us elsewhere, the theory fails to explain the origin of the seated Buddha image as no seated Yaksha images have been discovered so far. To explain the seated Buddha images Agrawala has laid emphasis on three elements, viz., *yogī* ideal, *Chakravartī* ideal and *mahāpurusha lakshaṇas*. But it would be wrong to suppose that at the same place and at the same time Buddha images emerged from two different sources—standing images emerged from the Yaksha images and the seated images from the aforesaid three elements. In our view there was no need for the artists of the Buddha image to copy any sculpture of Greece or India. All the images of Gandhāra and Mathurā and also of Amarāvatī are based on a common literary tradition. All the iconographic elements necessary to depict Buddha's personality were already present in the early Buddhist literature. The Indian artists of the Gaṅgā Valley and the Indo-Greek artist of Gandhāra were expert enough to portray the human form. Hence, when they were called upon to portray the Buddha in human form they had no

[1]Coomaraswamy, A. K., *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*, p. 182.

[2]Agrawala, V. S., *Indian Art*, I, p. 235 ff.

[3]Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 57; 'The Origin of Buddha Image', *Art Bulletin*, IX, No. 4, 1927.

[4]Lohuizen De Leeuw, *The Scythian Period*, p. 154.

[5]Agrawala, *op. cit.* According to Basham "The Mathurā sculptors drew inspiration for their Buddha images from the burly yakṣa figures of earlier centuries on the one hand and from the meditating Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras on the other." *The Wonder that was India*, p. 370.

difficulty in doing so. What they needed was some special features by which one could distinguish an image of the Buddha from those of other bhikshus, ascetics and yogins. For this the *mahāpurusha lakshaṇas* enumerated in the *Dīgha Nikāya* were used.[1] In other words the Buddha motif in human form was conceived and executed in stone by the artists of different schools according to their local traditions; otherwise the iconographic elements used by them were the same as conceived in the doctrine of the *anāsrava rūpakāya*.[2]

The school of Mathurā found its fulfilment in the Gupta age. The great Buddha figures of Mathurā, Sarnath, Ajanta, and Bihar symbolize the ideals of the whole age. Bronzes of the Gupta period rank with the best stone sculptures such as the life-size bronze Buddha from Sultanganj in Bihar. The bronzes of the Pāla period (9th-12th century A.D.) are however characterised by elegance of form and richness of details.

In the early medieval period Buddhist art was greatly influenced by Tāntrikism. Firstly, in Tāntrika Buddhism but for some exceptional examples the figure of Śākyamuni Buddha became rare; the Dhyānī Buddhas became more famous and popular. It is true that images of the Bodhisattvas associated with Mahāyāna were also popular, but prominence was given to the Dhyānī Buddhas, the divinities associated with their families and Hindu deities Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, Mahākāla etc. The images of Śākyamuni, wherever they are found, do not also reflect the spiritual dignity of ancient plastic Buddhas. Secondly, much more prominent place is given in the Tāntrika art to female divinities, such as Tārās of various colours and forms, Parṇaśabarī, Mārichi, Nairātmā, Hārīti, Bhṛkuṭī, Ekajaṭā Vajravārāhī etc. Now, the Bodhisattvas are also associated with their Śaktis or female co-efficients. These images of goddesses are fleshy, youthful and sensuous. Thirdly, a large number of Tāntrika images represent fierce and angry looking deities. And lastly, as a result of the influence of Tāntrika Buddhism, the tendency to represent gods and goddesses with many faces and arms increased.[3]

[1]Vide, Dutt, N., in *AIU*, p. 392.

[2]For some recent views on the origin and early evolution of the Buddha image see Narain, A. K. (ed.), *Studies in Buddhist Art of South Asia*, New Delhi, 1985; Sharma, R. C., *Buddhist Art of Mathurā*, Delhi, 1984.

[3]For details, vide, Bhattacharya, B., *Buddhist Iconography*, p. 334 ff.; also *History of Bengal*, I, ed. by R.C. Majumdar, p. 466 ff.; Coomaraswamy, A.K., *The Dance of Śiva*, p. 79 ff.

Goddesses like Tārā, Mārichi etc., for example, are shown with many arms.

Buddhist Painting

According to the Buddhist conception "painting is the product of the seeing faculty of mind, seeing without the operation of the sense of sight and proceeds from the *pratyakha* or direct intuition, not from *paroksha* or sense knowledge by perception. Painting is thus said to originate 'from the *darśana* activity of the mind, as distinct from its *jñāna* function.' "[1] In the *Atthasālinī* Buddhaghosha states that the *sippa* (*śilpa*, art) is a mental process. There are innumerable references to painted decorations in the *Jātakas* and other Buddhist texts. The process of preparing the ground for painting on the wall is mentioned in the *Chullavagga*. However, the bhikshus were not allowed to go into the *Chitraśālā*. According to the *Vinaya* bhikshus less than sixty years of age could not paint figures of men and women. The earliest surviving examples of Buddhist paintings date from the second century B.C. and are found in the chaitya halls of Ajanta. With the origin of Mahāyāna portrayal of the Buddha in anthropomorphic form was not only permitted but became necessary also. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* painting the figure of the Buddha on wall is regarded as a meritorious act (*puṇya karma*). The *Divyāvadāna* mentions that once Bimbisāra wished to send a portrait of the Buddha as a gift to his friend Udayana. When the artist expressed his inability to prepare it, the Buddha projected his shadow on the *paṭṭa* into which the painter filled the needed colours. However, Buddhist paintings attained maturity only during the Gupta period. The finest specimens of this period are found in the caves of Bāgh and Ajanta. A quiet dignity, poise and detachment are the hall-marks of classical Buddhist paintings. It may, however, be remembered that though painted for religious purposes, the murals of Ajanta bear rather a secular than a religious message and were not necessarily the work of the Buddhism-believing artists.

Buddhism and Some Other Aspects of Indian Culture

Role of Buddhism in the Propagation of Indian Culture

The role of Buddhism and Buddhist educational institutions in the

[1]C.I, p. 543.

propagation of Indian culture in Asian countries can hardly be overstressed. Yuan Chwang took home with him hundreds of bundles of manuscripts and devoted the rest of his life to translating into Chinese as many of them as he could. He was also the founder of one of the Ten Schools of Chinese Buddhism, the Fa-hsiang school, which claims the Nālandā scholar Śīlabhadra, Yuan Chwang's instructor at that University, as its founder.[1] A fellow student of Yuan Chwang at Nālandā was a Tibetan scholar, named Thonmi Saṁbhoṭa, who had been sent by the Tibetan monarch to study Buddhism in the land of its birth. As a result of his efforts the king was converted to Buddhism and for the first time this religion was declared the state religion of Tibet. A few centuries later, Dīpaṅkara went from the University of Vikramaśilā and gave the religion its present Lāmāist organization.[2]

Thus the outflow of influence from the Indian Buddhist universities led to the propagation of Indian art, literature, thought, myths and morals and appreciation of the teachings and tenets of Buddhism in other Asian lands. Buddhism went a long way in the task of propagating the principles of Indian culture in other uncultivated races of Asia which were notorious for their ferocious nature.

Some Unhealthy Aspects of the Influence of Buddhism

Some aspects of the political role of Buddhism in Indian history need to be put in proper perspective. Firstly, Buddhism was always a great financial burden both on the state and society, for from the very beginning it depended on state support and patronage of the rich for its existence. The Buddhist monasteries were huge establishments and monks lived on large scale government and public charities.[3] Consequently, as early as the age of Aśoka the monasteries became the haunts of the indolent on account of the assurance of sumptuous food, etc. The Buddhist tradition itself

[1]Dutt, S., *op. cit.*, p. 194.

[2]*Ibid.* For detailed study vide, S. Saha, *Buddhism in Central Asia*; Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, III; P. K. Mukherjee, *Indian Literature in China and Far East*; P. C. Bagchi, *India and China*; S. Dutt, *Buddhism in Far East*; Upendra Thakur, 'Indian Buddhist Missionaries in Central Asia and China', in *K.P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, Patna, 1981, p. 277 ff.

[3]For a detailed history of the life of Buddhist monks vide S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture), London, 1962.

testifies to it and also to the fact that Aśoka's exchequer had become empty as a result of these benefactions. Such a situation must have been faced by other Buddhist kings also. Here it would be illogical and improper to compare the support extended to the Buddhist Church with the charities made by ancient Indian kings to the Brāhmaṇas, because Brāhmaṇas lived in society and performed their social obligations, something which cannot be said with equal force about the Buddhist monks. Therefore there was a qualitative difference between the results of the charities made to the Brāhmaṇas and to the Buddhist Church.

Secondly, the influence of Buddhism on Indian polity was not always healthy: it tended to generate revulsion in such mighty emperors as Aśoka against political glory which could not but result in the arrest of the process of political growth. But it is a fact of life that like Dhanalakshmī, Rājyalakshmī (in the form of kingdoms and empires) either grows and expands or becomes weak and declines That is what happened during the reign of Aśoka. Due to the impact of Buddhism on him the process of the expansion of empire, which was going on with success since the days of Bimbisāra, suddenly stopped. It is of course true that Aśoka did not disband his army, but he certainly stopped its military activities. It does not need much effort to imagine that the number of officers who had practical experience of warfare must have been considerably smaller at the time of Aśoka's death than it was at the time of his Kalinga war. Similarly, in the absence of actual participation in warfare the preparedness, alertness and morale of the Mauryan army must have gone down. No wonder if it could not check the advance of the Bactrian Greeks immediately after Aśoka. In modern times we also experienced a similar fate when, in our enthusiasm for *pañchaśīla*, we neglected our defence preparedness and had to taste the bitter fruit of defeat in 1962.

That the impact of Buddhism on political thinking was not always very desirable is proved by the example of Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II, a devout Buddhist king. During his reign Mihirakula, the Hūṇa tyrant whose brutality on the Buddhists has become legendary, invaded. According to Yuan Chwang "some centuries previously a king named Mo-hi-lo-ku-lo (Mahirakula = Mihirakula), who had his seat of government at this city (Śākala), ruled over the Indians. He was a bold intrepid man of great ability and all the neighbouring states were his vassals. Wishing to apply his leisure to

the study of Buddhism, he ordered the clergy of his country to recommend a brother of eminent merit to be his teacher . . . Now at this time there was an old servant of the king's household who had been a monk for long time . . . This man was selected by the congregation of Brethren to comply with the royal summons. This insluting procedure enraged the king who forthwith ordered the utter extermination of the Buddhist church throughout all his dominions." That Mihirakula followed an anti-Buddhist policy, is proved by several other sources of information. According to Sung-Yun, "the disposition of this king (i.e. the ruler of Gandhāra in 520 A.D. when the Chinese ambassador visited his region) was cruel and vindictive, and he practiced the most barbarous atrocities. He did not believe in the law of the Buddha, but loved to worship demons. . . . Entirely self-reliant on his own strength, he had entered on a war with the country of Ki-pin (Kashmir), disputing the boundaries of their kingdom, and his troops had been already engaged in it for the three years." From this statement of Sung-Yun Mihirakula, followed an anti-Buddhist policy. In connection with Gandhāra Yuan Chwang also had occasion to relate how Mihirakula "renewed his project of exterminating Buddhism and with this view caused the demolition of 1600 topes and monasteries, and put to death nine koṭis of lay adherents of Buddhism." Yet, when the need arose, Narasiṁhagupta not only did not face the tyrant, but fled to the jungles and marshes, as Yuan Chwang puts it, 'to save his poor person'; and when his subordinates succeeded in defeating the barbarian invader after much bloodshed, in order to earn merit for the next world he not only freed him but also gave him girls and money.[1] Probably it was due to the same perverted psychology that the Sindh monks supported the Arab invaders against the ruling Brāhmaṇa dynasty in 712 A.D. The Buddhists are also known to have willingly submitted to the wholesale conversion whether in Sindh or Bengal whereas the Hindus survived this onslaught and succeeded in preserving their old faith.

In the end in order to summarize the whole discussion on the role of Buddhism in Indian history the present author would like to echo the sentiments expressed by Prof. P. V. Kane: "In these days", Prof. Kane writes, "it has become a fashion to praise Buddha and his doctrines to the skies and to disparage Hinduism by making

[1]Goyal, S.R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 348 ff.

unfair comparisons between the original doctrines of Buddha with the present practices and shortcomings of Hindu society. The *present author has to enter a strong protest against this tendency* ... The Upaniṣads had a nobler philosophy than that of Gautama the Buddha; the latter merely based his doctrines on the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. If Hinduism decayed in course of time and exhibited bad tendencies, the same or worse was the case with later Buddhism which gave up the noble but human Buddha, made him a god, worshipped his images and ran wild with such hideous practices as those of Vajrayāna." In this connection Kane quotes the following lines from Swami Vivekananda with approval: "thus in spite of the preaching of mercy to animals, in spite of the sublime ethical religion, in spite of the hair-splitting discussions about the existence or non-existence of a permanent soul, the whole building of Buddhism tumbled down piecemeal; and the ruin was simply hideous. I have neither the time nor the inclination to describe to you the hideousness that came in the wake of Buddhism. The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain ever conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism."[1]

[1]Kane, *HD*, V, Pt. II, pp. 1029-30.

Part 5

DECLINE, DISAPPEARANCE AND REVIVAL

Chapter 20

DECLINE AND DISAPPEARANCE

When did the Decline of Buddhism in India Commence ?

The causes of the decline of Buddhism in India and also the period when its decline commenced have been a matter of controversy. Some modern scholars such as P. C. Bagchi[1] and R. C. Mitra[2] have traced the decline of Buddhism from the seventh century A.D. According to L. M. Joshi, however, the decline of Buddhism in India had started at a considerably earlier date.[3] A comparative study of the writings of the Chinese pilgrim-scholars, viz. Fa-hsien, Sung-Yun, Yuan Chwang and I-tsing, who visited India in thefi fth, sixth and seventh centuries respectively, testify to the gradual decadence of Buddhism in several parts of the country. In a tradition preserved in the Pali canon itself the Buddha is said to have prophesied that the *dhamma* would begin to decay five hundred years after him i.e. about the first century A.D. This passage occurs in the *Aṅguttara* (iv. 278) and the *Vinaya* (II. 256). Bu-ston also records extracts from some older works which tend to suggest 1,000 years life-span of Buddhism. A similar tradition is found in the *Vinaya-Kshudraka*, the *Abhidharmasūtra*, and the *Abhidharmakoshavyākhyā*. According to the *Bhadrakalpikasūtra*, "the real Doctrine is to exist for 500 years and in the next 500 years there will be only a resemblance of it."[4] Yuan Chwang, who visited India in the seventh century A.D., has recorded a number of legends which were current in India at the time of his visit about the catastrophe that was to befall on the Doctrine. These legends and prophecies concerning the decline of Buddhism and also the actual decline as witnessed by the Chinese pilgrims in the form of deserted monasteries and flourishing Brāhmaṇical temples seem to suggest that the tendency of the decline

[1]Bagchi, P. C., 'Decline of Buddhism and its Causes', *Aśutosh Mukerjee Silver Jubilee Volumes*, III, p. 412.

[2]Mitra, R. C., *Decline of Buddhism in India*, p. 2.

[3]Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 302.

[4]*Studies*, p. 303.

of Buddhism appeared in about the fifth century after Nirvāṇa.[1] It is therefore not proper to fix any particular point of time for the beginning of decline. We feel that it was a gradual and slow process.[2]

Tibetan Accounts of the Final Phase of Buddhism and its Collapse

But the collapse of Buddhism in India towards the close of the twelfth century was somewhat sudden and almost total. When Nālandā was sacked by the Turks in 1197 A.D., Bihar was passing through a phase of political instability and religious rivalry. Tārānātha states that during the time of the Senas, "The Tīrthakas increased more and more in Magadha and many followers of the Turushka system of the Tājikas appeared."[3] Here the reference is most likely to the arrival in Bihar of some Muslim fakirs and adventurers. According to Tārānātha, the yogins, following Goraksha (that is the Nāthas of the Gorakhapantha) in order to obtain honours from the Tīrthaka kings became the worshippers of Īśvara (Śiva) and said that they would not resist even the Turushkas.[4] Dharmasvāmin of Tibet, who visited Bihar after about three decades of the sack of Nālandā, noted the strained feelings between the Hindus and the Buddhists. He found that the authorities in charge of the Bodha Gayā temple plastered the outside door of the temple and on its surface drew the image of Maheśvara in order to protect it from non-Buddhists.[5] He also narrates some stories of the Hindu Buddhist rivalry in which, of course, the Buddhists are said to have been victorious.[6] From the available evidence the shortsightedness of the Buddhists is also apparent, for some of the monks are said to have acted as agents of the Muslims. Tārānātha expressly states that 'Chandra' succeeded in Magadha with the help of some monks who enabled him to form a liaison with other small Turushka kings living in Bhaṅgala (modern Bhagalpur). The Buddhist monks were prob-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

[2] According to Pt. Umesh Mishra "both the rise and decline of Buddhism began almost simultaneously." (*Journal of G. N. Jha Research Institute*, IX, Pt. i, pp. 111-2). But as pointed out by L. M. Joshi 'rise' and 'decline' are mutually opposed events and cannot take place simultaneously (Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 326).

[3] Tārānātha, quoted by Buddha Prakash in *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, Agra, 1965, p. 211.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Roerich, G., *Biography of Dharmasvāmin : A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim*, p. 64.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 87-8.

ably disgruntled by the rise of Brāhmaṇism in Bihar under the Senas. Hence they did as their co-religionists of Sindh had done in 712 A.D. But they sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind, for it were the Buddhist establishments that were looted and burnt by the Muslim invaders with the result that Buddhist religion in its ecclesiastically organised form disappeared from the land. In 1197 A.D. Nālandā was sacked by Mohammad-ibn-Bakhtiyar Khalji. Vikramaśilā met the same fate shortly afterwards. The monks were mercilessly killed in large numbers. Those who escaped fled to Tibet and Nepal. The *Tabakāt-i-Nāsirī* records that Bakhtiyar Khalji led his army to Bihar and ravaged it. Great plunder fell into his hands. Most of the inhabitants of the place were 'Brāhmaṇas with shaven heads', that is Buddhist monks. They were put to death in large numbers and their books were burnt. Several other campaigns of the Turks to complete his task followed. Dharmasvāmin, the Tibetan pilgrim, was a witness to one such raid in the summer of 1235. A band of three hundred soldiers came from Odantapurī (Bihar Sharif) to sack what remained of Nālandā. Seventy scholars studying there under Rāhulaśrībhadra took to their heels. Only the aged Abbot remained whom the Tibetan pilgrim brought on his shoulders to the temple of Jñānanātha safely so that the invaders could not trace him. Hence they went back.[1] A similar raid occurred at Bodha Gayā earlier resulting in the demolition of the stone gate in front of the temple. The people fled and so too the king Buddhasena.

Numerous theories have been put forth to explain the decline and disappearance of Buddhism from India.[2] These are summarized as follows by R. C. Mitra:[3]

(1) Exhaustion,

(2) Internal corruption and decay,

(3) Divisive effect of sectarianism,

(4) Insufficient cultivation of the laity or the social failure of Buddhism,

[1]*Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, p. 94.

[2]For a discussion on the factors responsible for the decline of Buddhism, vide Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 1003–30; Barth, A., *Religions of India*, pp. 133–39; Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 157 ff., 319; 'Persecution of Buddhists in India', *Journal of Pali Text Society*, 1896, pp. 87–92; Kern, *Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 133–34; Mitra, R. C., *The Decline of Buddhism in India*, pp. 125–64; Morgan, K. W., *The Path of the Buddha*, pp. 47–50; Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, Ch. XVI; Majumdar, A. K., *Concise History of India*, 1983, pp. 455–67.

[3]Mitra, *op. cit.*

(5) Brāhmaṇical persecution,
(6) Withdrawal of royal patronage, and
(7) Muslim invasion.

The first of these suggestions, namely, that Buddhism was simply "exhausted" or "ready to die" in India by 1200 A.D., has found favour with Conze who remarks: ... "What Buddhism in India died from was just old age or sheer exhaustion."[1] But the suggestion must be dismissed as no light is cast by such a statement upon the actual *cause* of the death in question. As regards other factors, it is hard to accept that any one of these factors could have been decisive in percipitating the demise of this religion in India. To us P. V. Kane seems to be right when he asserts that " No single cause, not even a few causes can fully account for this phenomenon. A combination of causes, both internal and external, must have been in operation for a pretty long time to bring about this remarkable event."[2] Let us examine the factors enumerated by R. C. Mitra, along with some others, one by one.

Internal Factors in the Decline of Buddhism

Moral Decadence of Buddhism

According to K. W. Morgan,[3] Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana[4] and many others one of the most important causes of the decline of Buddhism was the moral decadence of the Buddhists. Even the earliest Buddhist texts reveal an awareness of tendencies towards laxity and corruption within the saṅgha that ultimately developed to the point where large numbers of monks were amassing personal or community wealth and engaging in various other improprieties. Later these tendencies were reflected in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims and in Indian literature. Yuan Chwang refers to the careless moral conduct of the Buddhist monks of Bolor or Balti. In Sindh he found that the monks killed animals, reared cattle and maintained wives and children. Kalhaṇa refers to this feature among the monks of Kashmir. In the *Milinda Pañho* Nāgasena admits that some people joined the saṅgha

[1]Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism*, 1960, p. 86.
[2]Kane, *HD*, V, Pt. ii, p. 1003.
[3]Morgan, K. W., *op. cit* , p. 48.
[4]*Journal Asiatique*, Vol. 225, 1934, pp. 209–30 (Quoted by Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1022 f.).

to gain a livelihood[1] In the *Mṛchchhakaṭika* of Śūdraka, the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti and and the *Daśakumāracharita* of Daṇḍin the Buddhist nuns appear as the 'go-betweens' and experts in procuring lovers. In the *Mattavilāsa prahasana* of Pallava Mahendravarman (a contemporary of Harsha) the Buddhist monks are criticised for their lack of self-control. In the *Chaturbhāṇi*, the Buddhist bhikshus are described as going to the houses of courtesans. In this work the Buddhist terminology is used for sex purposes in a vulgar way. The 'Sūtra of the Face of Lotus', translated into Chinese in 584 A.D., states that the monks took pleasure in doing only evil deeds. They were given to theft, pillage, and cultivation of lands. Bu-ston records from the *Chandragarbhaparipṛchchhāsūtra* that 1,300 years after the death of the Buddha (i.e. in about 800 A.D.) the monks shall covet riches and articles of enjoyments. The *Rāshṭrapālaparipṛchchhāsūtra* (usually assigned to the 6th century A.D.) describes the lax morals of the Buddhist monks. For example, in the form of Buddha's prophecy, it states: "My monks will be without shame and without virtue, haughty, intoxicating themselves with alcoholic drinks." Non-religious activities of the monks and nuns are also found mentioned in the accounts of the early Arab invasions on India. According to Arabs, a 'Samani' (śramaṇa) of Sindh had a family and was actively associated with the political and military affairs of the king.[2] It should be borne in mind, however, that probably every religious community goes through periods of decay; those that survive apparently respond to these situations with spontaneous internal reform. The ninth-century Jaina mystic Haribhadra, for example, raised his voice against the luxurious life style of many monks in the Jaina community and was able to arouse popular indignation to the point where such practices were greatly reduced.[3] Decay itself, then, need not be fatal; the inability of the Buddhists to generate any meaningful reforms must be ascribed to other causes.[4]

Divisive Effects of Sectarianism

According to some historians a very harmful factor for Buddhism leading to its decline were schism and fierce disputes in the saṅgha.

[1]Kane, *ibid.*, p. 1023, n. 1651.

[2]For references to these works see Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 305 f.

[3]Cf. Premi, Nathuram, *Jaina Sāhitya aura Itihāsa*, Bombay, 1956, p. 480 ff.

[4]Jaini, Padmanabh S., 'The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism : A Study in Contrast', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, p. 81 ff.

By the seventh century A.D. Buddhism was no longer one system; it had become a family of several schools and communities. The Buddha had himself visualized the danger of schism and had condemned it as one of the five deadly sins. As we have seen, the history of schism in Buddhism dates back from the time of the Buddha himself. Yuan Chwang found that the Hīnayānists of Sindh were criticising the Mahāyāna and Prajñāgupta, one of the most famous teachers of Hīnayāna, had composed a treatise of 700 ślokas against the Mahāyāna. Yuan Chwang himself was inspired by the Mahāyānists to destroy the Hīnayāna by composing a work in 16,000 ślokas. Śāntideva devoted a number of verses of his *Bodhicharyāvatāra* to the criticism of Vijñānavāda. Similarly, Chandrakīrti attacked all non-Mādhyamika systems of Buddhist thought and Śāntarakshita devoted a long section of his *Tattvasaṁgraha* to demolish the tenets of the Vātsīputrīyas. He, as well as Kamalaśīla, declared that the Pudgalavādins have no claims to be called the followers of the Buddha.[1] Thus, sectarian rivalry among priests not only rent the Hindus and the Buddhists, but also cleaved the various sects of the Buddhists themselves. Dharmasvāmin states that Bodha Gayā was the centre of Hīnayāna and Nālandā was the seat of Mahāyāna. The establishment at Bodha Gayā somehow passed into the hands of the Ceylonese monks, who had no soft corner for the followers of Mahāyāna. When the pilgrim visited the Vajrāsanavihāra, carrying an Indian manuscript of the *Ashṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā*, the keeper, a Śrāvaka, enquired, 'What book is it?' Dharmasvāmin answered that it was the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The Śrāvaka said, "You seem to be a good monk, but this carrying on your back of a Mahāyāna book is not good. Throw it into the river." Dharmasvāmin had to hide it. Dharmasvāmin worshipped an image which was either that of Khasarapaṇa or that of Tārā. Again said the keeper, "You seem to be a good monk, but it is improper to worship a householder."[2] The Mahāyānists had also a temple of Tārā at Bodha Gayā and they had invented stories showing the efficacy and superiority of their cult to the Hīnayāna. Tāranātha states that "a Mahāyāna school was founded at Vajrāsana and there appeared also some Yogins and Mahāyāna followers, who preached the religion." This must have fanned the flame of sectarian rancour and rivalry at

[1]For references, see Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 308 f.
[2]*Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, p. 74.

Bodha Gayā. Thus the disputes among the various sects of the Buddhists were as bitter as between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists.

This sectarian rivalry has often been construed as indicative of internal weakness of Buddhism. But as pointed out by P. S. Jaini this interpretation is not necessarily valid. "In fact, when dealing with the kind of non-centralized movement that Buddhism comprised, the emergence of numerous sects should probably be taken as a sign of both intellectual and spiritual vigor. Even more important, Buddhist sectarianism was confined to *interpretation* of texts; members of all schools more or less accepted the validity of the basic Tripiṭaka, shared an almost identical code of conduct, and moved easily among each other's communities. Contrast this situation with that of the Jainas, whose major sects, though only two in number, were from almost the earliest times completely estranged. Digambaras rejected the validity of nearly all texts in the Śvetāmbara canon and simply produced their own secondary scriptures. The definition of conduct suitable to a monk, moreover, was an issue of such magnitude that Digambaras viewed Śvetāmbara clerics as nothing more than advanced lay disciples. Members of these two schools have traditionally not set foot in each other's temples, and it is indeed only very recently that even the most tentative Digambara-Śvetāmbara dialouge has been initiated. It is fair to say, then, that the divisiveness associated with sectarianism was much more severe among Jainas than among the Buddhists; such divisiveness connot, therefore, reasonably be suggested as central to the downfall of Buddhism in India."[1]

Role of Mahāyāna and Tāntrikism

According to Charles Eliot "it was to the corruptions of the Mahāyāna rather than of the Hīnayāna that the decay of Buddhism in India was due."[2] L. M. Joshi feels that this "remark can hardly be regarded to be without some substance in it." For, "the growth and popularity of Mahāyānism resulted not only in the increase of the votaries of the religion, but also in a corresponding qualitative decay.... The Great Vehicle laid emphasis on the image-worship, prayers and incantations, pompous ceremonies and rituals; it incorporated many folk-beliefs and made room for the emotional

[1]Jaini, P. S., *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[2]Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 6.

demands of the laity, and in doing so, the Buddhists made a near and clear approach to Hinduism; this process ultimately led to the destruction of distinction between the two faiths. The laymen and lay-women of India found no difference between the worship of Viṣṇu and Buddha, of Śiva and Avalokita, and of Tārā and Pārvatī."[1] The Bodhisattvayāna seems to have given birth to the institution of 'married monks' mentioned by Yuan Chwang, Kalhaṇa and the *Chācha-nāmā*.[2] The Buddhist ascetic now went to his teacher along with a female partner. This tendency developed further in Tāntrika Buddhism. Almost all the 84 Siddhas of Tāntrika Buddhism were either married or had a yoginī as their partner. The Vajrayāna texts reveal a radical departure from classical Buddhism. The world of senses, which was earlier regarded as the cause of evil, was now taken as the proper field for making spiritual progress. Nirvāṇa, according to Vajrayāna, is to be attainable here and now, in this life and through the saṁsāra. The Vajrayāna advocated a moral anarchy among the yogins and yoginīs. The place of Five Moral Precepts, (Pañchasīla) is now taken by Pañchamakāras, the ideal of Nirvāṇa gives way to that of Mahāsukha (Great Delight) attainable not through *sīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, not even by the noble Eightfold Path, but by a mystic union with the yoginī.[3] In Tāntrika Buddhism the *dukkhavāda* of the Buddha was replaced by hedonism associated with the revelations of *Vajra sattva*. The rationalism of early Buddhism gave way to superstitious sorcery and erotic esoterism comes to the foreground. According to Joshi, among "the internal factors in the decay of Buddhism in India, the abuses of Vajrayāna perhaps occupy the foremost place."[4]

Thus many modern scholars have tended to ascribe to the Buddhist Tantras the role of contributing to the demise of Buddhism in India through peculiar doctrines and practices quite at variance with the lofty ethics and practices enjoined by Gautama Buddha. But as pointed out by Alex Wayman, "There is a kind of circular reasoning here. The Tantra is labelled 'degenerative' and so destructive of Buddhism's public image; and then to buttress the argument it is necessary to say that the Tantras are composed very late, close to the time when they are credited with this share in the

[1]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 309.
[2]For references, see *ibid.*, p. 308 f.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 310.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 311.

downfall of Buddhism. The implication is that they were public in nature. Then, if indeed these Tantras were composed much earlier, how are we to assess their later role? How are we to determine the public attitude toward Tantra, when it is a secretive cult with initiations in the old days given to certain disciples? And what of the probability that the practices themselves, apart from particular texts, may date back to cults that the Vedic Arynas attempted unsuccessfully to suppress and later had to come to terms with? Quite apart from the fact that there are different classes of Tantra, and that the more reprehended practices or tenets are not ubiquitous in the range of Tantra, the judgement takes no account of the striking and inescapable fact that the Tantra in its Hindu form has enjoyed great popularity, and apparently has not contributed to the demise of Hinduism in any observable amount.... Accordingly, while not denying that the Tantra was sometime followed in a degenerate form, one must look elsewhere for the reasons of Buddhism's decline in India. The Buddhist Tantras do not appear to have fostered Buddhism's successes in India, nor really in any observably significant degree to have caused Buddhism's decline."[1]

The Brain Drain

An important factor in the decline of Buddhism was the migration of many of the ablest and most vigorous exponents of Buddhist thought and faith from India for propagating their religion in other lands.[2] It tended to weaken the strength of Buddhism in India. Radhakrishnan names 24 eminent Indian scholars who went to China for propagating Buddha's teachings from the 3rd century A.D. to 973 A.D.[3] According to Joseph Edkins in the beginning of the 6th century A.D. the number of Indian Buddhists in China was more than three thousand.[4] So far as Buddhism is concerned it may be regarded a sort of 'brain drain' in ancient India.

Social Failure of Buddhism or Insufficient Cultivation of the Laity

As pointed out by P. V. Kane, for ordinary men the Hindu ideal of ordered scheme of life with peculiar duties and rights, particularly

[1]Wayman, Alex, 'Observations on the History and Influence of the Buddhist Tantra in India and Tibet,' in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, pp. 360–361.

[2]*HD*, V, Part ii, p. 1022.

[3]*India and China*, p. 27.

[4]Edkins, J., *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 99.

the imortance attached to *gṛhasthāśrama* was quite attractive.[1] In comparison to it Buddhism had nothing to offer. According to G.C. Pande, one of the important factors in the decline of Buddhism in India was its 'social failure.'[2] N. Dutt also remarks that "Buddhism was never a social movement."[3] The laity continued to practise the current practices and ceremonies, prescribed largely by the Brāhmaṇa priests. This tendency seems to have been apparent from an early period, for the very term "Buddhist" itself generally meant those who had actually left the household and become monks. While there certainly existed large number of upāsakas who *supported* Buddhism, there was no clearly defined set of criteria (vows, social codes, modes of worship, etc.) whereby these individuals could be identified as a separate religious group. Whereas the Jainas were always closely involved with their lay people, their Buddhist counterparts tended to remain aloof from all non-mendicants. There can be little doubt, then, that the sense of religious identification felt by the Buddhist *upāsakas* was often a weak one at best. As pointed out by Gokhale when a person, say a Brāhmaṇa, became a lay-devotee of the Buddha it only indicated that he expressed his respect to the Buddha as a "holy" man. It is nowhere said that such Brāhmaṇas ceased to hold the *brahmadeya* lands (a condition of whose control was to devote themselves to the Vedic learning and train their disciples in it) or ceased to be *purohitas*. In the case of Sunīdha and Vassakāra, the ministers of Ajātasattu, there is no specific mention that they ever formally declared themselves to be *upāsakas*. Nor is it necessary to assume that their 'conversion' signified any dramatic change in their traditional beliefs and social status.[4] Their becoming *upāsakas* did not signify their giving up the old 'caste' status. An inscription of first or second century A.D. from Kuda (in Maharashtra) quoted by Gokhale specifically mentions a gift to the vihāra there by a Brāhmaṇa who calls himself an *upāsaka*. Similarly, the votive inscriptions from Bharhut and Sāñchī contain evidence of gifts to those Buddhist vihāras by persons who do not seem to have been even *upāsakas*. In the case of royal donations to Buddhist establishments in Western India, the Brāhmaṇical affiliations of rulers, such

[1]Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1026.

[2]Pande, *Bauddha Dharma ke Vikāsa kā Itihāsa*, pp. 491–2; for the attitude of the Buddha to lay devotees cf. Barua, D.K., 'Buddhism and Lay Worshippers', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 3–4, pp 39–44.

[3]*Buddha Jayanti Souvenir*, p. 97 (quoted by Joshi, p. 323).

[4]Gokhale, *op. cit.*

as those belonging to the Sātavāhana or Kshatrapa dynasties, are clearly mentioned.[1] These examples prove that the 'conversion' of a follower of Brāhmaṇism to Buddhism did not mean any thing more than showing respect to the Buddha and his saṅgha and making donations to the latter. This situation is similar to the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslim *mazars* which the former happen to visit. The present author has himself visited the *mazar* of Ajmer Sharif, made donations to it and seen numerous other Hindus doing the same. The point is that such 'conversions' did not mean a distinct and separate 'religious' or social identity, as happens when a Hindu becomes a Muslim or Christian. Buddhism generally failed in establishing an organized group of lay-devotees who, on their 'conversion', regarded themselves, other than in their frequent or periodical visits and donations to Buddhist shrines as socially different from the rest of the community.[2] Therefore, argues Gokhale, "we must consider the history of Early Buddhism in two parts, one relating to the monastic fraternity, the other to the *upāsaka* and general lay supporters of the movement. Of the specifically Buddhist (doctrinal and organizational) character of the former, there is not the slightest doubt; it formed a distinct "religious" community. We cannot be as sure of the specifically Buddhist character (as a separate and distinct "religious" community) of the second category. There is reason to believe that in the history of Buddhism in India, the lay community never quite acquired the status of a separate and distinct "Buddhist" community. The distinction always existed in the monastic organization, but the unity of that organization splintered as soon as sects began to appear among the Buddhists, and sectarian donations then began to become evident. . . . Among the lay population, it seems, Buddhism remained a *sampradāya* (a part of the general social community), calling for special support from *upāsakas* and others favorably inclined toward the movement. Once the monastic communities disappeared from the surface of life, the lay supporters gradually became assimilated into the general "Hindu" community."[3] On the other hand, the strength of Brāhmaṇism lay in the fact that its religion and varṇāśrama-based society were inseparable. Therefore Hinduism survived even when the Muslims killed its ascetics and destroyed its temples;

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Gokhale, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

it survived in society.[1]

Buddhists' Dislike for Sanskrit !

According to Pt. Umesh Mishra one of the main causes of the decline of Buddhism in India was that the Buddhists hated Sanskrit and adopted Pali language. But history of Sanskrit Buddhist literature from c. 200 B.C. to c. 1200 A.D. is against this view. Some of the greatest names in the history of Sanskrit literature are those of Aśvaghosha, Āryaśūra, Bhartṛhari and Śāntideva, who were Buddhist by faith.

External Factors in the Decline of Buddhism

Hostility of the Brāhmaṇas

According to many scholars hostility of the Brāhmaṇas was one of the major causes of the decline of Buddhism in India. It has been argued that the Brāhmaṇas usually looked at Buddhist monks with contempt. Yājñavalkya (I. 271-72) declares that the very sight of a Buddhist monk, even in dreams, is inauspicious. The *Bṛhannāradīya-purāṇa* lays it down as a principal sin for a Brāhmaṇa to enter the house of a Buddhist even in times of great perils. The drama *Mṛchchhakaṭika* shows that in Ujjain the Buddhist monks were despised and their sight was considered inauspicious. The *Agnipurāṇa* (XVI.1, 37) declares that the son of Śuddhodana beguiled the daityas to become Buddhists. The *Vishṇupurāṇa* (XVIII, 13-18) also regards the Buddha as Māyāmoha who appeared in the world to delude the demons. Kumārila is said to have instigated King Sudhanvan of Ujjain to exterminate the Buddhists. The Tibetan historians Bu-ston and Tārānātha record his wars against the Buddhists. The *Kerala-utpatti* describes how he exterminated the Buddhists from Kerala. A greater role in the decline of Buddhism was played by Śaṅkara. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* of Mādhava tells us that Śaṅkara led a religious expedition against the Bauddhas and caused their destruction from the Himalayas to the Indian ocean. Śaṅkara has himself described the Buddhist system as '*vaināśika*' or '*sarva-vaināśika*'.[2] According to the Tibetan tradition, at his approach "the Buddhist

[1]Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 323.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 313.

monasteries began to tremble and the monks began to disperse pell-mell."[1] The hostility of the Hindus and the Buddhists is also illustrated by the following incident regarding the gutting of the famous nine-storeyed library building of Nālandā called 'Ratnodadhi', narrated in the Tibetan work *Pag-sam-jon-zang*: "After the Turuṣka raiders had made incursions in Nālandā, the temples and caityas there were repaired by a sage named Muditabhadra. Soon after this, Kukkuṭasiddha, minister of the king of Magadha, erected a temple at Nālandā, and while a religious sermon was being delivered there, two very indigent Tīrthika mendicants appeared. Some naughty young novice monks in disdain threw washing water on them. This made them very angry. After propitiating the sun for twelve years, they performed a yajña, fire-sacrifice, and threw living embers and ashes from the sacrifice-pit into the Buddhist temples etc. This produced a great conflagration which consumed Ratnodadhi."[2] As pointed out by Buddha Prakash there is no doubt that these bickerings and rivalries were confined to the priestly circles and the common man had much reverence for Buddhist monks, as we gather from Dharmasvāmin's remark that if a strip of red cloth was found on the road, it was respectfully picked up by the public. Hindus gave alms to Buddhist monks. The main supporter of Rāhulaśrībhadra, the last Abbot of Nālandā, was a Brāhmaṇa of Odantapurī named Jayadeva. The Karṇāṭa king of Mithilā, Rāmasiṅha, son of Narasiṁhadeva, treated Dharmasvāmin with great consideration.[3] One must remember, as Gopinātha Kavirāja has observed, that "The struggle between Buddhism and Hinduism was a war of pen and not of sword." It is just impossible to conceive that scholars like Kumārila or Śaṅkara resorted to force in their struggle against Buddhism.

B. G. Gokhale has stated the argument of the Brāhmaṇa hostility to Buddhism a little differently.[4] He points out that the anti-Buddhist bias appears in Brāhmaṇical literature from time to time, but it is a bias more against "the monastic movement in general, though in later periods (post-second century B.C.) the Buddhist monastic fraternity proved to be a highly visible target, because of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

[2] Cited in S. C. Vidyabhushan, *Medieval School of Indian Logic*, p. 146; *History of Indian Logic*, p. 516.

[3] *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, p. 100.

[4] Gokhale, *op. cit.*

its large numbers and the relative affluence of its monasteries. The withdrawal of relatively large groups of men and women, or the fear of such continuing and increasing withdrawal from economically productive work seems to have been a potent factor in the later disapproval of monasticism in general. The economic consequences of large-scale monastic movements led to the rise of anti-monastic sentiments, reflected in the *Arthaśāstra*, where Kauṭilya advised the king not to allow ascetics freely to frequent villages, for fear of interruption in their work. Later, Manu too shows his disapproval of the *Sannyāsa* mode, and advised that normally *sannyāsa* must follow the first three (*Brahmacarya*, *Gṛhastha* and *Vānaprastha*) modes or stages (*āśramas*) of life. Increasingly, therefore, social and political thinking, influenced by Brahmanism, began to disapprove of monasticism. But that may have been due more to the social and economic consequences of monasticism in general than to a particular dislike of the Buddhist variety Another factor may have been the emergence of the Brāhmaṇa as a closed group (caste) almost exclusively associated with priestly functions. The curious fact is that, as "Vedism" based on the *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* declined, Vedic ritual, in the form of the great sacrifices, became a court cult. The horse-sacrifice was performed by Puṣyamitra Śuṅga (*circa* 186–152 B.C.), Samudra Gupta (*circa* A.D. 350–370 ?) and several other later kings. The masses followed one of the more popular cults centering on worship of Śiva, Viṣṇu and other deities of the emerging Hindu pantheons. The Brāhmaṇas had then emerged as an exclusive group—"a genteel literati whose magical charisma" rested on their possession of the Vedic lore and its ritual, preserved in a "holy literature, written in a holy language remote from that of everyday speech." They and their rituals, based on the *Vedas* became the major, if not the only source, of satisfying the desire of rulers, sprung from non-descript dynastic origins, to acquire legitimacy through ritual consecration and affiliation and a share in the charisma of which the *Vedas* and the Vedic rituals were the repository. Anyone rejecting the *Vedas* and its ritual, which by this time was more or less restricted to court circles, threatened directly the sacerdotal authority of the new Brāhmaṇa caste. The Buddhist rejection of Vedic authority, which in the earlier period (500–200 B.C.) did not trouble greatly even *purohitas* who declared themselves as *upāsakas* of the Buddha, now challenged the very basis of the priestly power entrenched in the court circles. Accommodation,

therefore, was practically impossible, and therewith emerged the Brahanmical ire against Buddhism."[1]

Assimilation of Buddhism by Brāhmaṇism

A number of scholars including P. V. Kane[2], V. A. Smith[3], S. Radhakrishnan[4], B. M. Barua[5], P. C. Bagchi[6], R. C. Majumdar[7], R. C. Mitra,[8] S. Lévi[9] and others, have rightly opined that the most important factor in the decline of Buddhism in India was a 'gradual assimilation of Buddhism to Hinduism.' P. V. Kane and Radhakrishnan feel that the two religions were never very much different and the Buddha himself did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. According to Coomaraswamy "more profound is one's study of Hinduism and Buddhism, more difficult it becomes for him to distinguish between the two." The Mahāyāna was specially nearer to Brāhmaṇism. It laid emphasis on image-worship, prayers, incantations and rituals; it incorporated many folk-beliefs and made room for the emotional demands of the laity, and in doing so, the Buddhists made a nearer and clearer approach to Hinduism. This process tended to remove the distinction between the two faiths. The laymen and lay-women of India found no difference between the worship of Vishṇu and the Buddha, of Śiva and Avalokita and of Tārā and Pārvatī.

The acceptance of the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishṇu by Hinduism, though only as the beguiler of the demons, cut the ground from under the feet of Buddhism. The disapproval of animal sacrifice, the relaxation of caste rules and the organization of monastic community on the lines of Buddhist saṅgha by Śaṅkara, further helped the merger of Buddhism into Hinduism. Common patronage of Hinduism and Buddhism by kings of the Gupta, Vardhana (Pushyabhūti), Maitraka and Pāla dynasties also made it possible for both the Buddhists and the Hindus to borrow heavily

[1] Gokhale, *op. cit.*
[2] Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 1004–5.
[3] *EHI*, p. 368.
[4] Foreword to *2,500 Years of Buddhism*, p. xiv–xv; *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 609.
[5] Barua, *Prolegomena to a History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 19.
[6] *Ashutosh Mukerjee Volumes*, III, pp. 4–20.
[7] Majumdar, *CHI*, IV, pp. 47–8.
[8] *Viśvabhāratī Annals*, VI, pp. 150–55.
[9] *Le Nepal*, II, p. 317 (quoted by Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 322).

from each other. Yuan Chwang found non-Buddhists of Siṁhapura copying the customs of the Buddhists. In Gayā he saw this sacred Buddhist place completely populated by the Brāhmaṇas. The acceptance of the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishṇu had been accomplished probably in the sixth century A.D., perhaps first in the *Matsyapurāṇa*. A *Matsyapurāṇa* verse is found engraved on a Pallava monument of c. 700 A.D. at Mahābalipuram in which the Buddha is mentioned as the 9th *avatāra* of Vishṇu. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* mentions the Buddha as a deity and also as a god who deluded the demons.

Thus Buddha became a Hindu divinity. Gayā is now one of the foremost Hindu tīrthas. Śaṅkara organized the maṭha institution partly on the model of the Buddhist saṅgha. His philosophical terminology, his concepts of Māyā and of the 'non-dual', though based on the Upanishads are very much like those of the Mādhyamikas. That is why he is accused of being a 'Buddhist in disguise.' His grand guru's attempt to synthesize Vedānta and Buddhism is well-known

Lastly, in the post-Gupta period the Tantra practices harmonized the two systems so completely that Buddhism's independent existence might have appeared needless or even impossible. In spite of their being 'proclaimed by the Buddha', the Buddhist Tantras are almost identical with the Śaiva and Śākta Tantras. A large number of gods and goddesses became common to the pantheons of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Śākta Pīṭhas became equally important and holy for Hindu and Buddhist Tāntrikists.

According to P. S. Jaini the Buddhists committed a great error also by failing to respond meaningfully to the threat posed by the waves of *bhakti*. The popularity of the devotional cults, associated with Rāma and Kṛshṇa, must have caused many lay defections from the Buddhist ranks. This problem was compounded by the depiction of the Buddha himself, in the *Mahābhārata*, certain *Purāṇas*, and Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*, as an *avatāra* of Vishṇu. Buddhist monks were perhaps unaware of the grave dangers represented by these developments; for not a single extant text shows an attempt to refute the notion of Buddha as an *avatāra*. Thus by their very silence Buddhist writers gave tacit support to the Hinduization of the founder of their religion. The point becomes more obvious when one finds that the Jainas sought to counteract a similar Brāhmaṇical

suggestion[1] that Ṛshabha, their first Tīrthaṅkara, had been an incarnation of Vishṇu by attacking the "divine" status of Vishṇu himself.[2] More important, they produced entire alternate versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* wherein Rāma and Kṛshṇa were depicted as worldly Jaina heroes subject to the laws of Jaina ethics.[3] Rāma, for instance, does not kill Rāvaṇa in the Jaina edition of the story; this deed is instead performed by his brother Lakshmaṇa, and Rāma is reborn in heaven for his strict observance of *ahiṁsā*. Such a transformation was not possible for Kṛshṇa, whose deeds of violence and treachery were too numerous to cover up; thus, he is depicted as going to hell for a long period after his earthly death. Thus, the Jainas sought to outflank the *bhakti* movement by taking its main cult-figures as their own, while placing these figures in a uniquely Jaina context.

Withdrawal of Royal Patronage and the Persecution of Buddhism by Hindu Kings

Decline in the royal patronage of Buddhism is also regarded by some modern scholars as one of the important factors in the disappearance of Buddhism from the land of its birth. And it is true also that after the Guptas no strong and whole-hearted patron of Buddhism in India is known, except some of the Pāla kings (App. 8).[4] While Indian kings were bound by custom to assist all religions, their active support to a sect brought with it an increase in its status and tangible material gain in the form of a certain percentage of tax revenues, land grants, access to the royal court etc. Royal patronage was definitely a significantly positive factor during the formative years of the Buddhist movement. Nevertheless, we cannot blindly assert from this fact that with-

[1] *Bhāgavata P.*, V. 3–8.

[2] Cf. Jaini, P. S., 'Jina, Ṛṣabha as an *avatāra* of viṣṇu', *BSOAS*, XL, 2, 1977.

[3] At least sixteen Jaina *Rāmāyaṇas* are known to exist while there is only one Buddhist version of the same viz *Dasaratha Jātaka*. The Jaina version of the *Mahābhārata* is found in Jinasena's *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* and the *Trishashṭiśalākā-purushacharitra* of Hemachandra. No Buddhist version of this epic is known. Cf. also Chatterjee, Asim Kumar, 'The Rāmāyana in the Canonical and non-Canonical Texts of the Buddhists and Jains', *Śrī Dineśacandrikā, Studies in Indology*, ed. by B. N. Mukherjee *et. al.*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 159–65.

[4] The present writer does not believe that Harsha was personally a Buddhist, though it is accepted that he was generous to Buddhism also. See, Goyal, S. R., 'Did Harsha ever Embrace Buddhism as His Personal Religion?', *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, 1981, pp. 373–393; *Harsha and Buddhism*, Meerut, 1986; *Harsha Śīlāditya*, Ch. 9, Meerut, 1987; also see *infra*, Appendix 6.

drawal of such patronage (especially during the Hindu resurgence) meant the total eclipse of these traditions. The continued existence of Jainism, which was as dependent upon royal support as was Buddhism, belies any such claim.

As regards royal persecution of Buddhism, some rare instances are known. Yuan Chwang has recorded a legend concerning the harassment of a Buddhist philosopher Manoratha, a teacher of Vasubandhu, by a certain king Vikramāditya. The historicity of this legend is highly doubtful because all the Gupta Vikramādityas are known to have been extremely tolerant and respectful to Buddhism. Mention has already been made of king Sudhanvan of Ujjain, who is allegedly said to have ordered the slaughter of the Buddhists all over the country. As pointed out by Kane, of all the cases of alleged persecution this is the weakest, and no more than a boastful and rhetorical exaggeration.[1] The only early indigenous Indian king who can be accused of harassing the Buddhists is Pushyamitra Śuṅga, (cf. App. 2) though some modern scholars doubt the Buddhist tradition about him. However, the greatest of royal persecutors of Buddhism in India was Mihirakula (*supra*, pp. 378–79); but he was a barbarian of Hūṇa origin. His activities against Buddhism are recorded by Kalhaṇa and corroborated by Yuan Chwang and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. The ruins of the Ghoshitārāma monastery at Kauśāmbī and some other *vihāras* in North India indicate that some Buddhist establishments were destroyed by the Hūṇas.

After the Hūṇas the only notable example of anti-Buddhist activities was presented by Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa (cf. App. 7). No other significant example of the persecution of Buddhists by Indian kings is known. As pointed out by P. V. Kane,[2] the cases of persecution of Buddhists are very few while the proofs of the policy of toleration adopted by Indian kings are copious. Most of the scholars agree with Kane on this point.

Muslim Invasion

According to P. V. Kane and K. W. Morgan Muslim invasion of India delivered the final blow to Buddhism about and after 1200 A.D. by ruining the famous Buddhist universities like those of Nālandā

[1]Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1010.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 1011, n. 1645 a. For the policy of religious toleration followed by Hindu kings see *ibid.*, pp. 1011–18.

and Vikramaśilā.[1] In comparison to the Buddhists, the Jainas, thanks to their geographical position (largely in Western India and the Deccan), escaped the fury of the early Muslim onslaughts. Even so, as P. S. Jaini argues, one still must ask "how it was that the Buddhists were not able to regroup and rebuild after the initial holocaust had come to an end. We find, for example, that although a great number of Jaina temples in Gujarat and Rajasthan were converted into mosques in later centuries, the Jainas of those areas not only survived but were able to become important leaders in the economic life and government of the Muslim regimes. Hence, the Islamic invasion, though admittedly the most destructive of the external factors considered thus far, should not have been sufficient to destroy Buddhist society altogether."[2]

A Comparison of the Disappearance of Buddhism with the Survival of Jainism

In recent years P. S. Jaini has studied the question of the disappearance of Buddhism from India by comparing it with the survival of Jainism. He argues that it is hard to accept that any one of the factors enumerated by R. C. Mitra (see above) could have been decisive in precipitating the demise of Buddhism in India for similar and often identical forces were at work in Jaina community and yet failed to bring about its extinction. It is perhaps only by asking the question, "How is it that one Gangetic, non-theistic *Śramaṇa* tradition was able to survive while another closely related one was not ?", that we may discover the unique aspects of the Buddhist religion that ultimately led to its downfall.

That Buddhism and Jainism are in fact "similar" enough to warrant the sort of comparison, can hardly be denied. Gautama and Mahāvīra both, respective teachers of these two traditions, seem to have come from aristocratic republican families. Both are said to have left the household in the prime of life and to have spent several years in great austerities and mortifications. In addition, Buddha and Mahāvīra are perhaps the only two human beings in history to have claimed for themselves the attainment of "omniscience" (*sarvajñatā*). Following this attainment, both founded a saṅgha consisting of both monastic and lay followers, and each attracted large numbers of

[1]On the destruction of Nālandā, see Basham, *The Wander that was India*, 1959, p. 268.

[2]Jaini, P. S., *op. cit.*, p. 83.

Brāhmaṇas and sons of wealthy families to his Order. Finally, the two great teachers preached in the same general area for more than thirty years, passing at last into what was claimed to be their final death (*nirvāṇa* or *mukti*). The institutional histories of the religions originating from them also run parallel. Both movements often gained royal patronage and typically migrated along the trade routes in its pursuit; both developed extensive bodies of philosophical literature and were criticised for propounding anti-Vedic doctrines. Most important, both had to struggle for the preservation of their integrity amidst somewhat hostile Brāhmaṇical population. Thus, while the Jainas and Buddhists often engaged in heated polemics against each other, Jaini feels himself justified in viewing them as "cousin" traditions of Śramaṇic origins occupying an equivalent position relative to the surrounding environment. Viewing against this basic hypothesis, Jaini points out, all the above-mentioned explanations of the disappearance of Buddhism from India, whether referring to inherent weaknesses or to external pressures reflect a purely socio-historical perspective. But as these theories are wanting in some degree, particularly in their ability to explain the divergent fates of Buddhism and Jainism, we should turn our attention away from strictly social issues and focus instead upon the area of doctrine. In this connection, one is immediately struck by the fact that Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of the *bodhisattvas*, a class of exalted beings, has absolutely no counterpart in Jainism. This doctrine, which asserted the existence of numerous figures who had attained the enlightenment of the Buddha and yet chose to remain for ever in the *saṁsāra*, represents an attempt to provide an outlet for the devotional needs of the Buddhists laity. "These beings, however, were conceived of in such a way that the very fact of their enormous popularity worked for, rather than against, the destruction of Buddhism in India. This took place because the great *bodhisattvas* were described as completely supramundane by nature; rather than providing a human model of struggle and attainment, they became virtual gods, who dispensed worldly boons and even spiritual grace in a manner not unlike that of the Hindu deities. At last, the place of the historical Buddha himself was functionally usurped by these figures; although the Buddha remained nominally the most hallowed of beings, the bulk of popular interest and devotion was centered not upon him but upon the great *bodhisattvas*, especially Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara. While Jainas also allowed certain non-human figures to play a part in their rituals,

these were always limited to mere spirits (*yakṣas*) who were of lower status than Jaina mendicants. The *yakṣas* functioned as "guardians" of the holy shrines of the Tīrthaṅkaras; no great divinities on the Hindu model ever gained legitimacy in either Jaina doctrine or worship. Thus, there was little common ground to support the development of a subversive synthesis with Hindu belief and practice. By embracing the notion of the heavenly *bodhisattvas*, however, Buddhism laid itself open to precisely this sort of synthesis, particularly with the powerful Nātha cult of the tantric Śaivite tradition. It was this fact, we believe, that finally made the essential difference in the respective abilities of Jainism and Buddhism to survive."[1]

The various Buddhist temples fell into the hands of Hindus is well-known; notable examples are the shrines at Bodha Gayā and Sarnath. According to Jaini this process was facilitated by the cult of the Bodhisattvas. He has sought to illustrate this point by the example of a Śaiva temple found in the suburbs of Mangalore, (southern Karnataka) and known as Kadri-Mañjunātha. Now, although Śiva is commonly referred to by titles terminating in '*nātha*' (*e.g.*, Somanātha, Oṁkāranātha, Kedāranātha, Viśvanātha), this particular name 'Mañjunātha' is not known anywhere else. But as shown by M. G. Pai this shrine had once been a Buddhist vihāra and temple called Kadarikā-vihāra and within its shrine room stood an image of the Buddha. There is also found a beautiful bronze image of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, also called Lokeśvara. An inscription at the base of the Lokeśvara image credits its establishment to king Kundavarmā of the Alūpa dynasty, described as a great devotee of Śiva. He is said to have consecrated the image of Lord Lokeśvara in this vihāra in 1068 A.D.[2] Pai has shown, further, that Lokeśvara was identified with Matsyendranātha a Śaiva saint. Numerous caves in the vicinity of Kadri are dedicated to ascetics of the Nātha order which this saint established, and an image of Matsyendranātha himself adorns the outer wall of the "Kadarikā-vihāra" temple. From this Pai has concluded that this monastery was originally a centre of the cult of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. At a later date when this and other Bodhisattvas were identified with Śaiva deities, Nātha ascetics established a Śiva-liṅga in the temple and called it by the name Mañjunātha. Still later, disciples of Matsyendranātha, among whom should be included king

[1]Jaini, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 87.

Kundavarmā, arranged for the placing of the extant Lokeśvara image which they must have regarded as the divine form of their master. Thus gradually a Buddhist center was converted into a Śaiva temple. The process witnessed here was obviously an extremely typical one. The Buddhist Bodhisattva doctrine allowed not only this kind of absorption-by-identification, but also opened the door of Buddhism to the numerous Śaiva gods, goddesses, mantras, dhāraṇīs, and mystical tāntrika practices. Nātha influence on the Jainas, by contrast, was kept to a minimum; although certain tāntrika elements do appear in conjunction with the yakshas these are of an extremely superficial sort and cannot in any way be construed as a fundamental aspect of Jaina worship. "In Jainism, as is well-known, no counterpart of the Buddhist *Mahāyāna* ever appeared. Again, we can understand this fact on the basis of fundamental doctrine, *viz*., the Jaina assertion that no absolute philosophical statement could be taken as valid. This view was expressed by the term *anekānta* (non-absolutism), and led to the cardinal Jaina tenet of *syādvāda* ("qualified assertion"). For Jainas, in other words, no synthesis of the human and the supramundane was ever possible; hence the Tīrthaṅkaras remained the highest models of spiritual development, and such Tantric practices as identification of the self with the deity were simply out of the question. By excluding absolutism in any form, the Jainas limited themselves to a rather unexciting set of theories which probably exerted very little influence on Indian philosophical thoughts as a whole; certainly their texts cannot compare in beauty or interest with the spectacular flights of imagination and brilliant speculations found in the *Prajñāpāramitās*. Nevertheless, the tenacious adherence of Jaina *ācāryas* to the *anekānta* doctrine did have one result worth more to them than any praise for literary or philosophical merit; this was of course the survival of their religious community, an accomplishment which the Buddhists were ultimately unable to match."[1]

[1]*Ibid.*

Chapter 21

REVIVAL OF BUDDHISM IN MODERN INDIA

Buddhism in India after the Sack of Nālandā

As noted in the preceding Chapter Buddhism, which was already well on the road of decline due to various factors, disappeared from the Indian scene as a result of the Turkish invasions towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. The Turks massacred the 'shaven-headed Brāhmaṇas', that is the Buddhist monks in large numbers; those who escaped this fate fled to Tibet and Nepal. The Buddhist laity found no difficulty in merging itself in the mass of Hindu humanity and gradually lost its separate identity. When in the later half of the sixteenth century Akbar, the Mughal emperor, was trying to satisfy his religious quest by learning the teachings of all the religions known in his age, including Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity, nobody told him about the religion called Buddhism.

However, it would not be proper to assume that no trace of Buddhism was left in India after the destruction of Nālandā in 1197 A.D. When the Tibetan pilgrim Buddhasvāmin visited India in 1235, the Turks were still trying to destroy the Buddhist vihāras and there were still some monks left to flee to Tibet and Nepal. Then, there is the evidence of an illustrated Buddhist manuscript, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, which was produced in Bihar two centuries after the 'eradication' of Buddhism from there by the Muslims.[1] It shows that the lamp of Buddhism was still burning in that region, however dimly, and even the Buddhist art of illustrating the manuscripts had not completely died in the fifteenth century.

Finally, it may be recalled that throughout the medieval age the greater part of the Himalayan region continued to remain Buddhist. As a result of this, some mountaineous regions of India also continued to practise this religion. Now-a-days the neighbouring country of Bhutan is completely Buddhist. So is Tibet. Half of the population

[1]Pal, Pratapaditya, in *JRAS*, London, 1965, pp. 103–11.

of Nepal is also Buddhist. In parts of what is now Bangladesh Buddhism is still practised. Within the borders of India in some northern mountaineous regions Buddhism has been a living religion. In parts of Assam Buddhism still exists. The Indian state of Sikkim has been completely Buddhist. So is Ladakh, the northern part of Kashmir. In Ladakh Buddhism was introduced presumably in the age of Aśoka. The Red Sect Buddhism of Tibet entered here in the tenth and eleventh centuries and in the fifteenth century Yellow Sect Buddhism made its appearance. Buddhism also exists in Tripura, in the hill district of Nainital of Uttar Pradesh and in the Darjeeling district of Bengal. In some other regions of India also pockets of Buddhist population have continued to exist, such as in parts of Rajasthan and Orissa, though gradually their religion became debased and they have tended to forget their religious identity.[1] Thus, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the study of the Buddhist heritage of India, as a part of the ancient religions, culture and history of the country commenced, Buddhism was not much in evidence in India proper. It was a living force only in the Himalayan region.

Beginning of the Revival

By the beginning of the nineteenth century many Buddhist countries of Asia, and also India, the birth-place of the religion, had lost their independence. As soon as most of these countries became independent in or before the middle of the present century their pride in their Buddhist heritage came to surface. Burma and Ceylon took most active part in the resurgence of Buddhism in Asia. In 1871 the Fifth Buddhist Council was held in Mandalay in Burma when the Pali texts were inscribed on 729 marble slabs under the patronage of King Mindon.

In India the movement for the revival of Buddhism had its origin in Indological researches during the past 100 years, especially by the Orientalists. The archaeological discoveries and the recovery and translation of ancient texts by the nineteenth century European scholars gave momentum to the study of the Buddhist heritage of India. The practical shape to the revival of Buddhism in this country was, however, given by Mahāsthavira Mahavir of Kusinagar (U.P.), Anāgārika Dharmapāla of Ceylon, and a group of Buddhist monks

[1]D. Valisinha, in *2,500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 467.

of Chittagong (Bengal). More than a hundred years ago Mahāsthavira Mahavir, whose former name was Amar Singh, after receiving higher ordination in Burma, settled at Kusinagar, the place of Buddha's Parinirvāṇa. He came from a wealthy family of U.P. He joined the first war of independence fought in 1857. After 1857 he went to Ceylon and spent there a number of years as a Buddhist monk and studied Pali and Buddhism. From Ceylon he went to Burma where he received training in Buddhist meditation for a few years. After his return to India, he attracted the attention of several young men who were initiated and ordained for the propagation of the Dharma. Later he settled at Kusinagar. Almost at the same time, that is in sixties of the last century (1864 approximately), Saramedha or Saramitta Sangharaja of Akyab crossed over to the eastern part of Bengal and began to point out the corrupt practices of the Tāntrika form of Buddhism as a result of which the people of the area came closer to the Theravāda Buddhism practised in Burma. The first higher Ordination (*Upasampadā*) was performed in that very year.[1]

Work of Anāgārika Dharmapāla and Mahā Bodhi Society

The greatest stimulus for the revival of Buddhism in India came from the establishment of the Mahā Bodhi Society in Colombo in May 1891 by Dharmapāla who is called Anāgārika (homeless). He came from an aristocratic family of Ceylon and dedicated his lifes to the revival of Buddhism in the land of its birth. He first came to India in January 1891 and paid a visit to Bodha Gayā. In May 1891 he returned to Ceylon and founded the Mahā Bodhi Society in Colombo. The maintenance of a staff of bhikkus at Bodha Gaya representing the Buddhist countries of Asia, and the publication of Buddhist literature in English and Indian languages were two of the objects of this newly-founded Society. In June 1891 the Society sent a mission to Bodha Gayā and in October 1891 held an International Buddhist Conference there in which China, Japan, Ceylon and the Chittagong Hill Tracts were also represented. The object of this Conference was to draw the attention of the Buddhist world to the state of affairs at Bodha Gayā. In May, 1892 the Society launched its organ, *The Mahā Bodhi and the United Buddhist World*, which was to be used as an instrument for the propagation of the Dharma not only in India but in all the countries

[1]Jinananda, B., in *Buddhism*, ed., by K. L. S. Rao, p. 103.

of the world where English was understood. In 1897, when severe famine broke out in Bengal, the Society opened a relief fund and sent an appeal to all the Buddhist countries of Asia for help. In 1900 three branches of the Society were opened at Madras, Kusinagar and Anuradhapura (in Ceylon). In 1915 the Mahā Bodhi Society became a registered body with Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee as its first president. Within the next five years, the Dharmarājika Chaitya Vihāra of the Society was built in Calcutta. The Society was presented in 1920 with a casket containing the relics of the bones of the Buddha, which were to be enshrined in the Vihāra. These relics were found at Bhaṭṭiprolu in the Krishna district by archaeological explorers in 1891.

In 1949, the Government of Bihar came forward with legislation for the management of the temple of Bodh Gayā and had the Buddha Gaya Temple Act, 1949, passed Under this Act, a Committee, called the Buddha Gaya Temple Management Committee, consisting of four Buddhists and four Hindus, was constituted The Committee is entrusted with the management and control of the temple. Meanwhile, the Mūlagandhakuṭī Vihāra had been built at Sarnath. It was completed in 1931. With the subsequent establishment of the Mahā Bodhi Vidyālaya, the Vihāra Library, the Mahā Bodhi Free Dispensary, the Mahā Bodhi Primary School and the Teachers' Training College, Sarnath once again became a centre of Buddhism. The Society at present has branches at Gayā, Sarnath, New Delhi, Lucknow, Bombay, Madras, Nautanwa and Ajmer.

In 1949 the relics of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, chief disciples of the Buddha, which for nearly a century had lain in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, were at the instance of the Mahā Bodhi Society restored to India. The relics were taken to Sāñchī, the place of their discovery, and re-enshrined in the newly built vihāra. The Mahā Bodhi Society also took up in right earnest the task of publishing translations of the Buddhist scriptures into Indian languages which has brought the study of Buddhism within the reach of everybody.

2,500th Anniversary of Buddhism and the Sixth Buddhist Council Held in Burma

Meanwhile the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa, according to the Theravāda tradition, was drawing near; it was to be held in 1956. The event was eagerly awaited by the Buddhists all

over the world for in some Buddhist texts there is a prophecy about the resurgence of Buddhism throughout the world 2,500 years after the passing away of the Master. This has led the Buddhists, specially the Theravādins, to believe that the time is coming when the promise of Buddhism as a world religion would be fulfilled. To celebrate the 2,500 anniversary of their religion, Burma convened the Sixth Buddhist Council for the recital of the Tripiṭaka by the clergy of different Buddhist countries. The duration of the Council was for about two years till the Vaiśākha Pūrṇimā day of 2,500th year of the Buddhist era, *i.e.* the full-moon day, May 1956. The chief purpose of the Sixth Buddhist Council was to discuss and debate the points of the Dhamma in general and to delete the errors, if any, that may have crept in some of the books of the *Tipiṭaka.* After the Fifth Buddhist Council of Mandalay (Burma) it was noticed that there were some glaring mistakes in the marble slabs engraved by scribes.[1] Keeping this fact in view, the Buddha Sāsana Council decided to prepare the following authentic editions for the sixth Buddhist Council :

1. Pali Texts in Burmese script with commentaries and sub-commentaries,
2. *Tipiṭaka-Sāra* (or abridged edition of the *Tipiṭaka*),
3. A Burmese translation of the *Tipiṭaka,*
4. A Hindi translation of the *Tipiṭaka,*
5. An English translation of the *Tipiṭaka,*
6. The Pali *Tipiṭaka* in Devanāgarī script, and
7. The Pali *Tipiṭaka* in Roman script.

With regard to the publication of Pali *Tipiṭaka* in Devanāgarī script, the Government of Bihar formulated a scheme in collaboration with the Government of India and published all the Pali texts of the *Tipiṭaka* in 41 volumes. These volumes were prepared on the basis of the editions available in Burmese, Sinhalese, Siamese and Roman scripts and published under the general editorship of Bikkhu Jagdish Kashyap, Director, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara in the name of Devanāgarī Pali Tipiṭaka Publication Board. In addition to this series published from Nālandā, Buddhist Sanskrit texts were edited and published under the general editorship of the Director, Mithilā Sanskrit Research Institute, Darbhanga.[2]

[1]Jinananda, *op. cit.*
[2]*Ibid.*

In India also, the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa, was celebrated on a nation-wide scale. The year 1959 saw the flight of the Dalai Lama from Tibet to India and the influx of about 50,000 Tibetan refugees, among them more than a thousand monks. From the point of view of Buddhist revival, however, the most decisive and far-reaching event of modern times occurred when the late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in an open field at Nagpur on 14 October, 1956 along with about three hundred thousand of his followers. The event may be regarded as significant also because the views of Ambedkar on Buddhism have been somewhat unorthodox (Chapter 22).

Revival of Pali Studies

Resurgence of Buddhism in modern India was concomitant with the revival of Pali studies. It was indeed a necessity because the religious teachings of the Buddha were primarily available in the Pali language. But there were not many Buddhist scholars in India, except in Bengal and Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. Professor Dharmananda Kesambi created much interest in Pali and Buddhism in Gujarat and Maharashtra also. Dr. S. C. Vidyabhusan, being attracted by Sarat Chandra Das, began to take interest in Tibetan studies and thereafter in Pali language and Buddhism. He was the first scholar to take M. A. degree in Pali in India in 1901. Some of the zealous youngmen (not monks) went to Ceylon and Siam to increase their proficiency in the subject. In later years a few students and brilliant scholars were sent to Burma and Thailand for higher studies in this language. Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, as far back as the year 1908, introduced the study of Pali at Calcutta University from the Matriculation stage right up to M. A. degree examination. The Post-Graduate Department of Pali at Calcutta University has done and is doing pioneer research work, thereby bringing to light the treasures of Pali literature. The following universities have also made provision for the teaching of Pali : Banaras Hindu University, Poona University, Bombay University, Nagpur University, Baroda University, Lucknow University, Visvabharati University, Kurukshetra University, Delhi University, Punjabi University and Varanaseya Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya. Nava Nalanda Mahavihara (Magadh University), a Pali Post-Graduate Research Institute, is exclusively devoted to the Pali studies. The latest to come into the field is the Nalanda Pali Institute of Rajgir (Rājagṛha).

Increasing Numbers of Indian Buddhists

"By the early decades of this century the beginnings of a revived Indian Buddhism were evident—in limited but influential conversions at both extremes of Indian society. These included Tamil-speaking *pariahs* in the South and the emergence out of caste-Hindu society in the North of a trio of Buddhist scholars, Mahapandita Rahula Sanskrityayan, Ven. Anand Kausalyayan and Ven. Jagdish Kashyap."[1] There were 180,823 Buddhists in India in 1951, 3,250,227 in 1961, and 38,12,325 in 1971, according to the Indian Census. The great bulk of the Buddhists are in Maharashtra, 32,64,000 Buddhists, but there are sizable numbers in urban centers outside that State: 10,000 in Andhra Pradesh, 81,800 in Madhya Pradesh, 14,100 in Karnataka, 8,700 in the city of Delhi, 8,400 in Orissa, 1,300 in the Punjab, 3,600 in Rajasthan, 1,100 in Tamilnadu, 42,200 in Uttar Pradesh and 39,600 in West Bengal. But some Buddhist leaders believe that their numbers are higher arguing that converts are often reluctant to identify themselves officially as Buddhists and thereby forfeit, in all States but Maharashtra, benefits to which they are entitled as members of the Scheduled Castes. Estimates by leading bhikkhus now range up to fourteen and even twenty million.[2]

[1]Macy, Joanna Rogers, and Zelliot, Eleanor, 'Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Indian Buddhism', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A.K. Narain, p. 134.

[2]*Ibid.*

Chapter 22

AMBEDKAR AND CONTEMPORARY INDIAN BUDDHISM

B.R. Ambedkar

Bhimrao Ramjee Ambedkar (1891—Dec. 7, 1956) was a great jurist, lawyer and political leader of modern India. He was one of the prime architects of the Indian constitution and an outspoken militant champion of the claims to equality of the 'untouchables.' As he was himself born in the Mahar caste, an 'untouchable' community of Maharashtra, he had himself experienced the agony, anguish and humiliation faced by such communities. He was therefore a merciless critic of the 'hypocracies' of Brāhmaṇism. After the death of his first wife he married a lady of the Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa caste.[1] He even characterised Gandhiji as a clever politician whose championship of the 'untouchables' was, according to Ambedkar, hypocratical because it was rooted in political motivation.[2] He believed that in early Vedic society merit was recognised and birth considerations were not the primary factors in determining one's social status. He also put forward the view that the Śūdras were not the dark-skinned aborginals enslaved by the Aryan invaders, but they too were Aryans and belonged to the solar dynasty of the Kshatriyas. They became degraded later on and were accorded the lowest status in the four-fold social structure which was devised to perpetuate social inequality.

The Nagpur Dhamma Dikshā

Ambedkar had been interested in Buddhism for most of his adult life. He had been drawn to Buddhist teachings since his student days. Further reflection and reading convinced him that the path to social equality and psychological liberation for the 'untouchables' lay in the teachings of the Buddha. He studied Buddhism deeply

[1]Varma, V.P., *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Agra, 1960, p. 567.

[2]Ambedkar, B.R., *What Congress and Gandhi have Done to the Untouchabes?* pp. 263, 297.

and extensively and met a number of people who had become interested in this religion. The writings of the Tamil Buddhists, especially of P.L. Narasu and of Mahatma Jotiba Phule, a nineteenth century radical social reformer of Maharashtra, made a strong impact upon him. He himself claimed that he had three gurus—the Buddha, Kabir and Jotiba Phule. He travelled to Ceylon and Burma to see living Buddhism in these countries. He had prepared his followers psychologically for a conversion from Hinduism from 1935 on, beginning with his own statement that he 'would not die a Hindu.' But his conversion took place quite late, on October 14, 1956. The oldest bhikkhu then in India, Mahāsthavira Chandra mani of Burma, came to Nagpur for the conversion ceremony and initiated Ambedkar into Buddhism. In less than two months after his Dīkshā Ambedkar died (December 7, 1956). Thus he died a Buddhist, and before his death set in motion a movement that soon involved over three million people. Another huge ceremony was held in Bombay ten days after his death in which Ananda Kausalyayana, a Pali scholar and Hindi speaking Punjabi Brāhmaṇa monk, initiated thousands to Buddhism. But these massive conversions mainly affected only low castes, particularly the Mahars of Maharashtra, the community of Ambedkar, who had been involved for decades in a battle for political, social and religious rights. Their conversion, however, made the authority of 'Babasaheb' Ambedkar unquestioned for them. A few even refer to him as a 'Second Buddha' and describe the Nagpur Dīkshā as a new Dharmachakrapravartana.[1]

The 'Bible' of Ambedkar's Movement

The chief vehicle for transmitting and interpreting the new faith of Ambedkar is his book *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.[2] It was written in English at the end of his life, published posthumously and subsequently translated into Hindi and Marathi. It is a rationalised biography of the Buddha and contains a selection from Buddhist Pali works. Ambedkar's aim was to produce a 'Bible' and so it has

[1]Macy, Joanna Rogers, and Zelliot, Eleanor, 'Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Indian Buddhism', in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A.K. Narain, Delhi, 1980, p. 134.

[2]Ambedkar, B. R., *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Bombay, 1974. To facilitate reference Ambedkar numbered his Volume's books, parts, sections and paragraphs. These references are given after each citation.

been and continues to be for his followers. For many of those who can read, it is the sole Buddhist text they own or have read; for most of those who are illiterate it is the only one they have heard, read aloud to them. It is not intended to be a scholarly work. In it the events of Buddha's life are narrated free style and much liberty has been enjoyed in the selection, amplification and interpretation of the Pali passages. No attempt has been made to maintain a distinction between the translation of the original passage and Ambedkar's commentary on it.[1] The liberty taken with the Pali passages has naturally earned the criticism of a number of traditional Buddhists. However, in his Hindi translation of the volume, Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana, who has identified the original texts from which Ambedkar drew, observes, though somewhat inaccurately, that it represents a 'new orientation, but not a distortion' and that all central doctrines of Buddhism are present in it.[1]

Ambedkar himself offers the criteria, by which he determines the authenticity of Buddha's teachings, thus: "There is one test," he says, "which is available. If there is anything which could be said with confidence, it is: He (the Buddha) was nothing if not rational, if not logical. Anything, therefore, which is rational and logical, other things being equal, may be taken to be the word of the Buddha. The second thing is that the Buddha never cared to enter into a discussion which was not profitable for man's welfare. Therefore, anything attributed to the Buddha which did not relate to man's welfare cannot be accepted to be the word of the Buddha."[2] Thus two characteristics of the Buddha's teachings were prized by Ambedkar most: their rationality on one hand, and their social message on the other. He describes the Buddha as "a reformer, full of the most earnest moral purpose and trained in all the intellectual culture of his time, who had the originality and the courage to put forth deliberately and with a knowledge of opposing views, the doctrine of a salvation to be found here, in this life, in inward change of heart to be brought about by the practice of self-culture and self-control."[3] P. L. Lakshmi Narasu[4] has also written much to the same effect: "The dictum accepted in all schools of Buddhism is that nothing can be accepted as the teachings of the Master, which

[1]Macy, Joanna Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
[1]IV. V. 12, 4.
[3]II. II. 7, 7.
[4]Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Madras, 1907, p. vii.

is not in strict accord with reason." Thus in fighting the Hindu ideas of god, soul and *avatāra* upon which, they believe, the caste system rests, Ambedkar and his followers appeal in the last analysis to no other authority than the human reason itself. The religious implications of taking reason and logic as ultimate authorities do not appear to concern them.[1]

Ambedkar's Points of Departure from Traditional Buddhism

Ambedkar introduced a number of innovations in traditional Buddhism. These innovations may not be regarded as isolated phenomena. Fresh views on the Buddhist social ethics, have been expressed in other countries of South and South-East Asia also, though evidently in the Buddhism of Ambedkar the degree of divergence from traditional doctrine is much greater. Thus Ambedkar and his views can be seen as a part of a larger phenomenon of 'modernisation' of Buddhism in Asia.

(1) The 'rationalism' of the Buddha serves chiefly, in Ambedkar's Buddhism, to deny the existence of God and *ātman*. Whereas the Buddha on these questions apparently maintained silence, Ambedkar's Buddha is certain and explicit. "He began by saying that his Dhamma had nothing to do with God and soul. His Dhamma had nothing to do with life after death", wrote Ambedkar of the Buddha's first sermon,[2] for in his eyes the greatest danger of the belief in God and soul is the basis it provides for belief in caste. There is no God who created from his body the four *varṇas*, no God who ordained as part of his sacred order this cruel division of society. There is no *ātman* to transmigrate and visit the sins of one life upon the next. Thus according to Ambedkar 'atheism' is the key element of Buddhism, as much a hallmark as its rationality and egalitarianism.

(2) Ambedkar's rejection of the existence of *ātman* led him to the rejection of 'belief in saṁsāra, *i.e.*, transmigration of the soul', 'belief in moksha or salvation of the soul', and 'belief in Karma (as) the determination of man's position in present life.'[3] The Buddha 'denied the fatalistic view of karma. He replaced (it) by a much more scientific view of karma.'[4] According to this 'scientific' view,

[1]Macy, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
[2]II. II. 2. 14.
[3]I. VII. 1. 1.
[4]I. VII. 2. 3.

rebirth as a concept applies only to the natural components of a being. When the body dies, the four elements disperse and live on. "While any psychological or spiritual dimension to the concept of rebirth is denied, karma as moral law is acknowledged. It is operative only within one's present life and the general moral order."[1]

(3) If the Buddha's gospel is essentially social, so is *dukkha*, the central Buddhist notion of suffering or sorrow. "The recognition of suffering (is) the real basis of religion", writes Ambedkar in his version of the Buddha's first sermon. But this suffering is the condition of 'misery and poverty', wrought by social and economic injustice. "Man's misery is the result of man's inequity to man."[2] It is what we do to each other rather than what we do to ourselves. The sorrow that is envisioned by the Buddha is not the sorrow of soul, of re-birth, of the law of karma, but the sorrow of the present injustices performed by the established class.

In this view the central insight of the traditional Buddhist vision of *dukkha* is omitted and suffering is interpreted as a social phenomena.[3]

(4) Ambedkar's vision of suffering as primarily a social phenomena entails a reinterpretation of the Four Noble Truths. For, if one's suffering results from social injustice from without then its cause and alleviation do not relate directly to one's desire for craving. In Ambedkar's version of the Buddha's first sermon, therefore, "the recognition of human suffering" and "the removal of this misery" are taught and can be viewed as equivalents to the first and fourth Noble Truths. But to the second and third Noble Truths, this sermon presents no analogous teachings, for no attention is given to the cause of this suffering nor any mention made of craving or desire (*tanha* of the Chattāri Ariya Satyāni). At one place Ambedkar does mention craving but there again in social terms: " 'Why is this craving or greed to be condemned? Because of this', said the Buddha to Ānanda, 'many a bad and wicked state of things arises—blows and wounds, strife, contradiction and retorts; quarrelling, slander and lies.' "[4]

(5) Ambedkar gives a new account of the *Mahābhinishkramaṇa*

[1]Macy, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40.

[2]III. V. 2. 16.

[3]That Ambedkar's social interpretation of *dukkha* is not historically accurate is obvious from Chapter 15 of the present work.

[4]III. III. 4. 12-14.

(Great Renunciation) of Gautama Siddhārtha. The cause for Gautama's renunciation of his princely life were not the traditional Four Sights. Ambedkar found it irrational to suppose that a man of 29 would not have been exposed earlier to the presence of sickness and death: "These are common events occurring by the hundreds and the Buddha could not have failed to come across them earlier. It is impossible to accept the traditional explanation that this was the first time he saw them. The explanation is not plausible and does not appeal to reason."[1] Ambedkar obviously does not feel that this story could have a symbolic truth or that the Four Sights could be interpreted as metaphors for human transience and pain. Instead, he suggests that the renunciation was the result of Gautama's refusal to support a Śākya military action against the Koliya tribe in a feud over water rights. Determined not to participate in war, Siddhārtha went into voluntary exile as a *parivrājaka*. His moral stand lent courage to those Śākyas who were opposed to the use of force and the war was averted. When apprised of this development and invited to return home, Gautama reflected and refused; this decision was his Great Renunciation: "He had left home because he was opposed to war. 'Now that the war is over is there any problem left for me? Does my problem end because the war has ended?' On deep reflection he thought not. 'The problem of war is essentially a problem of conflict. It is only a part of a larger problem. This conflict is going on not only between kings and nations but between nobles and Brahmins, between householders,. . . The conflict between nations is occasional. But the conflict between classes is constant and perpetual. It is this which is the root of all sorrow and suffering in the world. . . I have to find a solution for this problem of social conflict.' "[2]

Ambedkar probably derived the idea for this interpretation of *Mahābhinishkramaṇa* from the writing of Dharmanand Kosambi, who in his *Bhagavān Buddha* published originally in 1940, had criticized the credibility of the story of the Four Sights and had turned to the Rohiṇī water dispute that is described in the *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, in which the Buddha intercedes and recites the *Attadaṇḍa sutta* decrying conflict and the use of force. To explain the Great Renunciation Kosambi had also suggested that the original event occurred

[1]Quoted by Macy, *op. cit.*, p. 135–6.
[2]I. II. 6. 4–9.

before the Buddha's Enlightenment and that, while revulsion for the world and hope for *Nibbāna* played a part in Gautama's motives for Great Renunciation, the Śākya-Koliya river dispute probably constituted the main reason.

(6) The salvation to which the Buddha points is seen as a 'kingdom of righteousness on earth' and even Enlightenment itself is presented in a purely pragmatic way: "On the night of the last day of the fourth week", Ambedkar writes, "light dawned upon him (on the Buddha). He realized that there were two problems. The first problem was that there was suffering in the world and the second problem was how to remove this suffering and make mankind happy."[1]

(7) Ambedkar played down the role of saṅgha in the history of Buddhism. To remove the impression that the Buddha addressed himself primarily to the bhikkhus, Ambedkar stresses that "the Buddha clearly had the laity in mind when he preached." According to him the Five Precepts and the Eight-fold Path (which he assumes were included in the original Buddhism) were addressed to householders. The saṅgha, in his view, was instituted by the Buddha to serve as a model and show that the ideals he preached were practicable: "Is the bhikkhu to devote himself to self-culture or is he to serve the people and guide them? He must discharge both functions. Without self-culture he is not fit to guide . . . A bhikkhu leaves his home. But he does not retire from the world. He leaves his home so that he may have the freedom and the opportunity to serve those who are attached to their homes, but whose life is full of sorrow, misery and unhappiness and who cannot help themselves . . . . A bhikkhu who is indifferent to the woes of mankind, however perfect in self-culture, is not at all a bhikkhu. He may be something else, but he is not a bhikkhu."[2]

Ambedkar emphasizes that the differences between the bhikkhus and the lay-followers were essentially formal—homelessness, property, celibacy, initiation, ceremony and accountability for vows. "Except on (these) points there is no difference between the life of the bhikkhu and the Upāsaka." He stresses that the laity could bring complaint of any monastic mischief or misconduct and claims that lay complaints occasioned amendments to monastic rules and

[1] I. IV. 2, 9.
[2] V. II. 4 17-22.

that the *Vinaya Piṭaka* is nothing but redress of complaints of the laity. In Ambedkar's view the difference between *upāsakas* and bhikkhus as to initiation of *dīkshā* turned out to be a grievous one : "Saṅgha-Dīkshā included both, initiation into the saṅgha as well as into the Dhamma. But there was no separate Dhamma-Dīkshā for those who wanted to be initiated into the Dhamma, but did not wish to become members of the saṅgha, ... This was a grave omission. It was one of the causes which ultimately led to the downfall of Buddhism in India."[1] To amend this 'grave omission' Ambedkar invented the Dhamma-Dīkshā ceremony for the laity. He publicly expressed the opinion that the majority of modern bhikkhus had "neither learning nor service in them", and urged monks to follow the example of Christian missionaries to reach the masses.

(8) According to Ambedkar India's aboriginal stock had common ethnic roots which he identified as Nāga. Subjugated by the Aryans the Nāgas became Buddhist in large numbers. They were progressively excluded from the mainstream of society and eventually caste out as the ancestors of the untouchables. Before their extreme degradation these people became patrons and disseminators of Buddhism. In his conversion speech Ambedkar pointed to the Nāgas as chief propagators who "spread the teachings of Bhagavān Buddha all over India." The Koliyas, to whom Gautama was related on his mother's side, belonged to this ethnic stock. So the Nāgas were connected to the Dhamma's origins through blood and were instrumental in its spread. Many of his followers see a symbolic significance in the choice of Nagpur, city of the Nāgas, for the mass conversion of 1956.

(9) The inclusion of 'Bābāsāheb' Ambedkar as an object of reverence is the most visible innovation in the practice adopted by his followers. The Buddha and Bābāsāheb in plaster, stone, poster-art and painting, in song and drama and story, rarely one without the other, are continual evidence that Buddhism of Ambedkar's, followers combines its own tradition with that of the main Buddhist tradition. Ambedkar is neither worshipped nor prayed to, nor of course is the Buddha. But on every occasion both figures are garlanded, the Buddha first; incense is burnt and Bhagavān Gautama Buddha and Paramapūjya Bābāsāheb Ambedkar are addressed before any speech is delivered. Some of his followers regard Ambedkar as a

[1] V. IV. 1. 10–12.

Bodhisattva in recognition of his role as the saviour of modern Indian converts to Buddhism. His followers feel that he has been responsible for the progress in their lives and that he has shown them the way to a religion that is both honourable and honoured, a religion that negates the religious concepts which classified them as untouchables. Another broadly-accepted way of honouring him is to add his name to the list of refuges, *i.e. Bhīmam śaraṇam gachchhāmi*, so that the 'Three Jewels' become four : I go for refuge to the Buddha; I go for refuge to the Dhamma (doctrine); I go for refuge to the Saṅgha (Order of monks); I go for refuge to Bhimarao.[1] However, these efforts to honour Ambedkar are regarded as an affront by some Buddhists outside the Ambedkar movement.

(10) The new buildings dedicated to the Buddhist religion of Ambedkar's movement in Maharashtra, as well as the old buildings converted to Buddhists' use, are called *vihāras*. The words for temple in Marathi, *deul* and *mandira*, are not used. These vihāras are, however, not so much living quarters for the monks as a meeting place for the laity, a place where the image of the Buddha can be kept, the community can gather for lectures on Buddhism or for *vandanā* and children can be taught. Such a multipurpose vihāra most often is a plain rectangular structure, embellished where possible with architectural details from Buddhist structures such as the caves of Ajanta and the stūpa of Sāñchī. In some vihāras there are quarters for travelling or resident bhikkhus. Others combine a room for the image of the Buddha with a room for a pre-school or kindergarten. But there is no *pujārī* or ritual priest, and no stream of individual worshippers paying homage to the image. The *vihāra* serves chiefly as a center for the community to gather as Buddhists.[2]

(11) At the time of the conversion of Ambedkar and his followers in 1956, there were few Buddhist bhikkhus in India, and none who spoke Marathi as his native tongue. There were few trained bhikkhus available for *dikshā* and teaching. In its early days therefore the Ambedkar movement was led by his Republican Party. Religious conversion at the hands of political leaders may have seemed strange to the outsiders, but for those in the movement it was unavoidable. However, soon a group of leaders rose at the local level. These were the students—young men and a few women—trained in the schools and

[1]Zelliot, Eleanor, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 146.

colleges that Ambedkar had founded. Some had studied Pali and all had sought out some knowledge of Buddhism in the early days of the conversion movement. They conducted marriages and memorial services in a simple ritual devised by Ambedkar, founded classes for children and study groups for adults, joined in Young Men's Buddhist Associations and women's service groups, published pamphlets on Buddhism in Marathi, wrote songs to be sung in community meetings and organised lectures by learned monks.[1] But the non-political leadership that arose at the local level could not produce a strong central leadership. The only Maharashtrian center for the training of bhikkhus is that at Nagpur, where Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana, in 1970, built a home and training center on the grounds where the 1956 conversion took place, and has educated dozens of young men, some of whom have been ordained as bhikkhus.

(12) The followers of Ambedkar celebrate four great observances—Dhamma Dīkshā Day, Buddha Jayantī, Ambedkar's Death Memorial Day, and Ambedkar Jayantī. On the anniversary of the day of the conversion, October 14, observed as the Dhamma Dīkshā Day, some return for a great ceremony to the field in Nagpur where the 1956 conversion was held; others hold local observances of varying sorts.[2] Ambedkar's death day is a time for quiet and sorrowful gatherings. His birth date, April 14, on the other hand, is a noisy and joyful occasion. "While these observances bear some resemblance to Hindu or other Indian holy days or festivals, particularly in the idea of the public processions and the exhibiting of the photographs of the "gurus", the Buddha and Ambedkar, they are unlike Hindu occasions in their emphasis on teaching and in their rationality. There is no one astrologically-timed sacred moment, no one hallowed sacred space. There is no need for a religious figure to give an auspicious presence, blessing or rite."[3]

Assessment of the Movement

"Once it is realized that Buddhism is a social gospel, its revival would be an everlasting event", said Ambedkar. He accords in his 'Bible' great weight to the egalitarian aspect of Buddha's life and message. The scriptural stories of the Buddha's acceptance of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

and regard for the low and outcaste followers, such as the sweeper Sumita, the barber Upāli, the untouchables Sopaka and Suppiya and others, are featured in his Bible. Some outward symbols of traditional Buddhism are stressed, —the image of the Buddha the study of Pali, the use of Pali ritual phrases in group *vandanā*, honour shown to the caves of Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad, Nāsik and Junnār 'and pilgrimages to Sāñchī, Sarnath and Bodha Gayā.

The innovations in the Ambedkar movement represent those elements in the past of the Buddhists that are important for their present progress : the work of Ambedkar himself, their social unity in the face of continued prejudice and their rejection of Hinduism as a religion of inequality. There is also retention of some Hindu or Indian elements—the *guru* idea, the public processions, the days honouring the birth or death of great men. Alongwith this amalgam of traditional Buddhism, the Mahar past and the socio-religious practices of Hindu society in general, the followers of Ambedkar seem to have created some new and interesting developments on their own. The multi-purpose *vihāras* and the initiative and responsibility of the lay leaders are the most striking of these.[1] Ambedkar's view of the saṅgha, "whether accurate or not, has some relevance for a period when many Indian Buddhists have little or no contact with a monk. Bhikkhus, especially native-speaking ones, are still rare, and Ambedkar's emphasis on the dignity and role of the laity helps foster an attitude of religious self-reliance. Although the need to train more monks is expressed, there also is talk of the need to develop an *upāsaka* or lay Sangha and of its appropriateness now in a time and community that lack the economic base for a full-time Order."[2]

"In sum, this revisioning of the Buddhist past relates to the life situation of the converts. The Dhamma's origins in social concern, its non-Aryan character and the ambiguous role of the Saṅgha, are departures from traditional view that appear integral to the relevance the converts find in it."[3] Whether the relative independence felt by the laity will impede the growth of a traditional saṅgha is difficult to be said. "Given the drive for equality that motivated Ambedkar to lead his people into Buddhism, it is clear why he interprets the Dhamma in social terms. That this social emphasis

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 150 51.
[2] Macy, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
[3] *Ibid.*

led to exclude or distort some teaching, fundamental to traditional and canonical Buddhism, is understandable, yet it raises substantial problems. His perception of the nature and cause of human suffering, while meaningful to his followers, forfeits a major insight which the Buddha represented. His perception of liberation, although invigorating as a call to ethical action, lacks the transcendent dimension of freedom which the Buddha also represented."[1] In the opinion of Joanna Macy these problems "can raise questions about the durability of contemporary Indian Buddhism as a religious movements."[2]

[1]*Op. cit.*, p. 142.
[2]*Ibid.*

Part 6

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

AŚOKA'S INTEREST IN BUDDHISM BEFORE HIS ACCESSION

The question of the beginning of the interest of Aśoka in the religion of Śākyamuni has been a point of dispute mainly because scholars have usually not differentiated between his interest (which could have grown gradually) in Buddhism and his conversion to it. As shown by Romila Thapar,[1] the Buddhist legends regarding the 'sudden' acceptance of Buddhism by Aśoka cannot now be accepted, though we would like to emphasise that this position does not negate the historicity of the fact of conversion as an event as a result of the influence of some Buddhist monk at the right psychological moment. Many scholars believe that the reason of Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism was the horror of the Kaliṅga War, since in his RE XIII he expresses his deep repentance over it. However, according to Eggermont,[2] the conversion of Aśoka to the new faith occurred before the Kaliṅga War. He has pointed out that according to *Samanta-pāsādikā*, Aśoka became a follower of the Buddha in his fourth regnal year. The Ceylones chronicles date this event from the eighth year (on the expiry of seven years). The chronicles also state that Nigrodha, who was born in the year of Aśoka's coronation, became a monk at the age of seven and converted the king to Buddhism. Now, as the Kaliṅga War began eight years after the coronation, it tends to prove that the conversion of Aśoka to Buddhism took place before the Kaliṅga War. After analysing the contents of the MRE, D.R. Bhandarkar has also reached to the conclusion that Aśoka was converted to Buddhism about one year earlier than the Kaliṅga War.[3] Whether this view is correct or not, it cannot be denied that Aśoka's contact with Buddhism and probably his interest in it, began much earlier than the Kaliṅga War. The Imperial

[1]Thapar, R., *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Delhi, 1973, p. 33 f.

[2]Eggermont, *The Chronology of the Reign of Aśoka Moriya*, quoted by Bongard-Levin, G.M., *Mauryan India*, p. 342.

[3]Bhandarkar, D.R., *Aśoka*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 71 ff.

Maurya family was in touch with the Buddhists since the days of Chandragupta. Commentaries on the *Therī-Gāthā* say that Chandragupta, incited by Chaṇakya, issued an order to imprison the father of one of the Buddhist leaders.[1] On the other hand the *Bhavishyottara Purāṇa* (III. 6.43) states that Chandragupta was a patron of Buddhism (*Bauddhatatparaḥ*). How far these legends are reliable, it is difficult to say, but they do suggest that the Imperial Mauryas were in contact with the Buddhists from the beginning of their history.

That Aśoka himself took interest in Buddhism even before he became emperor is now definitely known. It is revealed by some of his inscriptions recently found from M.P. In 1975 Bhopardikar and K.D. Bannerji explored the region between Shahganj and Rehti, i.e. the Middle Narmada Valley, in the Budhani Tehsil of District Sehore, Madhya Pradesh. Here some forty-five rock-shelters were found. Several stūpa complexes, habitation sites and two Aśokan inscriptions were also brought to light near the villages Bayan and Pangoraria. Some caves have religious symbols, faded inscriptions, and stone benches. In caves and rock shelters near Pangoraria symbols, namely *svastika*, *triratna*, *kalaśa* etc. are depicted in painting. The rock-shelter site, now known as Saru-Maru-ki Kothadi comprises a monastic complex. The main shelter here has two Aśokan inscriptions. One of them is a version of the MRE I. It has been published by D.C. Sircar in one of his books.[2] Its introductory section runs thus: "The King named Priyardarsin (writes) to Kumara Samva from (his) march (of pilgrimage) to the (Buddhist) monastery at Upunitha or Opunitha in Maṇema-deśa."[3] The other inscription found at Pangoraria records the visit of Piyadasi, as *Mahārājakumāra* (prince) to the site. South of the Bayan and Saru Maru caves a flourishing metropolis might have existed as is evidenced by two huge NBP ware bearing mounds within a distance of 10 km. Obviously when Aśoka was a prince and Viceroy of Madhya Pradesh with headquarters at Vidiśā, he visited this site and at that time paid a visit to the Pangoraria caves also, and took steps to make these natural caves more comfortable for the monks living in them by chiselling steps and benches etc. for them. It conclusively proves that even as a prince Aśoka was interested in and had contacts with Buddhist monks living in rock-shelters of this region.

[1] *DPPN*, I, p. 846.
[2] Sircar, D.C., *Aśokan Studies*, Calcutta, 1979, pp. 94–103.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Appendix 2

PUSHYAMITRA ŚUṄGA AND THE PERSECUTION OF BUDDHISM[1]

Pushyamitra (184–48 B.C.), the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty, who is generally regarded as the symbol and leader of the Brāhmaṇical revival after the Maurya rule which had given boost to the heterodox faiths, has been depicted in the Buddhist tradition as a persecutor of Buddhism. Actually Pushyamitra and Śaśāṅka are the only kings of some importance who are accused of following a deliberate and systematic policy of persecuting the religion of Śākyamuni in ancient India.

According to the *Divyāvadāna*, acting on the advice of his Brāhmaṇa chaplain, Pushyamitra resolved to annihilate the teachings of the Buddha. He went out to destroy the great Kukkuṭārāma at Pāṭaliputra which Aśoka had built but was frightened by a roar and came back. He then marched out with a four-fold army destroying stūpas, burning monasteries and killing the monks, as far as Śākala, where he made his infamous declaration: 'Whosoever gives me the head of a Śramaṇa, him I shall give a hundred dīnārs.' He ultimately perished at the hands of the Yaksha Krimīśa, being crushed to death underneath a boulder hurled by the latter.[2]

A similar story is told in the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. "In the Low Age (*Yugādhame*) there will be king, the chief Gomin (Gomimukhya) 'destroyer of my religion' (530). Having seized the East and the gate of Kashmir, he the fool, the wicked, will destroy monasteries with relics, and kill monks of good conduct. He will die in the North (532–33), being killed alongwith his officers, his animals and relations by the fall of a mountain rock (534). He was destined to a dreadful suffering in hell (535–537)."[3] As this account occurs immediately after that of the Mauryas, the reference is obviously to Pushyamitra Śuṅga. P.C. Bagchi has made the plausible

[1]This Appendix has been written by Mr. Shankar Goyal, M.A., of the Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut.

[2]*Divyāvadāna*, ed. by P.L. Vaidya, Darbhanga, 1959, p. 282.

[3]Jayaswal, *An Imperial History of India*, Lahore, 1934, pp. 18–19.

suggestion that Gomimukhya is probably a Prakritised form of Gaulmikamukhya meaning the chief of the commanders of army divisions, i.e. commander-in-chief or *senāpati*,[1] the title by which Pushyamitra is generally mentioned in Indian tradition.

In his *History of Buddhism in India* (1608 A.D.) Lāmā Tārānātha, the celebrated Tibetan Buddhist historian, mentions the march of Pushyamitra from Madhyadeśa to Jalandhara. In the course of his campaigns, Pushyamitra is reported to have burnt down numerous Buddhist monasteries and killed a number of learned monks, as a result of which, within five years, the doctrine was extinct in the north.[2]

The Buddhist literary tradition is supported by archaeological evidence. At Takshaśilā there is evidence of some damage done to the Buddhist establishments about this time.[3] In the case of Sāñchī there is all too clear evidence of damage wrought during the age of Pushyamitra. At Kauśāmbī also there is evidence of the destruction and burning of the great monastery of Ghoshitārāma in the second century B.C. This fact was brought to light by the Allahabad University Kauśāmbī Expedition, and the Director of the Expedition, the late Professor G.R. Sharma, was inclined to connect the phenomenon with the persecution of Buddhism by Pushyamitra.[4]

But a group of Indologists including H.C. Raychaudhuri,[5] Jagannath,[6] K.P. Jayaswal,[7] and R.S. Tripathi[8] have expressed scepticism about the veracity of the Buddhist stories regarding the persecution of Buddhism by Pushyamitra. They believe that the policy of the Śuṅgas was tolerant one. They argue that:

(1) An inscription which was engraved at Bharhut[9] 'during the sovereignty of the Śuṅgas' (*Suganam raje*) records some additions to the Buddhist monuments at that place.

(2) The *Mahāvaṃsa* admits the presence of numerous monas-

[1]Bagchi, P.C., in *IHQ*, XXII, No. 1, p. 82.

[2]Tārānātha, *History of Buddhism in India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, 1977, p. 121.

[3]Marshall, John, *Taxila*, I.

[4]Quoted by J.S. Negi, *Groundwork of Ancient Indian History*, p. 294.

[5]Raychaudhury, *PHAI*, 1953, pp. 388-89.

[6]Jagannath, in *CHI*, II, ed. by K.A.N. Sastri, p. 99.

[7]Jayaswal, K.P., *JBORS*, 1918, p. 263.

[8]Tripathi, R.S., *History of Ancient India*, p. 187. Also see Pankaj, N.Q., *State and Religion in Ancient India*, pp. 107-8.

[9]Sircar, *SI*, p. 87.

teries in Bihar, Avadha, Malwa and adjacent provinces in the age of Duṭṭhagāmiṇi of Ceylon (c. 101–77 B.C.) which is synchronous with the later Śuṅga period.

(3) Buddhist sources are not reliable because they are not only far removed from the age of Pushyamitra, but were generally hostile to non-Buddhist kings. They represent non-Buddhists in extremely sombre colours. Even Aśoka, before he was converted to Buddhism, has been depicted as an extremely cruel monarch—as Chaṇḍāśoka—in contrast to what he became as a result of the impact of Buddhism on him.

(4) The probative value of the *Divyāvadāna* is also seriously impaired by the representation in it of the 'persecuting' monarch as a Maurya, a descendant of Aśoka himself.

(5) The notorious declaration made at Śākala by Pushyamitra seems to be quite imaginative as at that time it was the base of Menander, a staunch Buddhist ruler. Further, *dīnār* coins were not prevalent in that period.

(6) Pushyamitra did not dispense with the services of Buddhist ministers, and the court of his son was graced by Paṇḍitā-Kauśikī.[1]

(7) Some scholars suggest that the anti-Buddhist activities of Pushyamitra were due to political reasons, rather than sectarian rancour. They hold that, dissatisfied with his patronage to Brāhmaṇism, the Buddhists became politically active against him and sided with his enemies, the Greeks, with the result that he had to put them down with a heavy hand.[2] Jayaswal points out that it was at Śākala, the town and base of Menander, that Pushyamitra made his notorious declaration setting a price of hundred gold pieces on the head of every Buddhist monk.[3] But where the Buddhists did not or could not ally themselves with the invading Indo-Greeks, Pushyamitra did not harass them.

But the arguments advanced by Raychaudhuri and his supporters, absolving Pushyamitra of adopting an anti-Buddhist policy, cannot be accepted. To argue that the proof for the adoption of such a policy comes only from the Buddhist sources is not only incorrect but is fallacious too. It may be pointed out that the archaeological evidence also points to the destruction of Buddhist establishments of Kauśāmbī, Sāñchī and Takshaśilā in the same general period and

[1]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, Act I.
[2]Cf. *CHI*, II, p. 99.
[3]Cf. Jayaswal, K. P., in *JBORS*, 1918, p. 263.

thus supports the literary tradition. Secondly, one wonders from which other source except the Buddhist literature, proof for the adoption of a policy of persecution of the Buddhists and their religion by Pushyamitra may be expected. After all it is the persecuted party which may be expected to preserve the memory of the fact of persecution. To say that such sources are not reliable because the revival of Brāhmaṇism under Pushyamitra had made them angry is like saying that Mullā Badāyūni is not to be trusted for his report on religious policy of Akbar because he did not like the Mughal emperor and the latter's approach towards Hinduism. If Akbar adopted any anti-Islamic measures it should be expected to be mentioned in the work of anti-Akbar Mullā Badāyūni, rather than in the work of pro-Akbar Abul Fazl. In the same way, the report of the persecution of the Buddhists by Pushyamitra should be expected to be found in the Buddhist literature. Here it may also be pointed out that the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and the work of Tārānātha belong to different periods and places. It cannot be maintained that all these three sources have deliberately concocted almost similar stories regarding anti-Buddhist policy of Pushyamitra (two of them even recording the identical tradition that Pushyamitra was killed by a boulder hurled on him). Therefore, despite the incorporation of some super-natural elements in these stories (which are found in all such legends) we cannot ignore the antipathy of the Buddhist writers towards Pushyamitra. The argument that *Divyāvadāna* refers to Pushyamitra as a Maurya, and hence is not reliable is untenable. If the author of the text had wrong information on one point it can not mean that his entire testimony is unworthy of credence. Such a supposition would make a nonsense of all the literary tradition on ancient Indian history because there is hardly any text which does not give inaccurate information here or there.

Raychaudhuri commits a strange fallacy. He is the author and champion of the view that Pushyamitra was not a Śuṅga; rather he belonged to the *Baimbika* family of Kāśyapa gotra and that the Śuṅgas, who were of Bhāradvāja gotra, acquired political power some generations after Pushyamitra. And yet he argues that the Bharhut inscription referring to the construction of Buddhist monuments in the age of the Śuṅgas (*Suganam raje*) proves that Buddhism was in a florishing state during the regin of Pushyamitra! Even if one believes that Pushyamitra was of Śuṅga extraction, it cannot be maintained that the phrase *Suganam raje* necessarily includes his reign as

well. The Śuṅgas, during whose reign the Bharhut Buddhist monuments were constructed, could have been his successors. On palaeographical grounds the inscription does not belong to the reign of Pushyamitra.[1] N. G. Majumdar has also placed the construction of the Buddhist monuments at Bharhut in the beginning of the first century B.C.,[2] that is about a century after Pushyamitra. Therefore, even if Pushyamitra was a Śuṅga, the construction of Buddhist monument at Bharhut cannot be advanced as a proof of the flourishing condition of Buddhism in his reign, because it is nobody's case that his successors were also persecutors of this religion.

Raychaudhuri has pointed out that according to the *Mālavikāgnimitra* a certain Bhagavatī Kauśikī lived in the court of Agnimitra, the son of Pushyamitra. But there is nothing to show that Bhagavatī Kauśikī was a Buddhist nun.

Lastly, let us analyse the argument that Pushyamitra might have harassed the Buddhists because of latter's close relationship with the Indo-Greek rulers. But putting pressure on those who ally themselves with the enemy of the state is one thing and the burning of monasteries and stūpas and killing of monks indiscriminately is another. It is the same argument by which some historians try to explain away the destruction of temples and mass killings of the Hindus by fanatic Muslim kings. To us it appears that despite the fact that some Buddhists sided with the foreign invaders Pushyamitra had no business to persecute all the Buddhists indiscriminately and destroy their religious establishments. Thus it would appear that he was one of those extremely rare exceptions in which Brāhmaṇical kings adopted the policy of religious persecution to achieve their aim—whatever it was.

[1]Ghosh, N. N., *Early History of India*, pp. 163–5.

[2]Majumdar, N. G., *A Guide to the Sculptures in Indian Museum*, p. 14, quoted by Ghosh, N. N., in *B.C. Law Volume*, I, p. 217.

Appendix 3

MENANDER AS A BUDDHIST KING[1]

Menander (middle of the second century B.C.), the Indo-Greek king, is famous as a great patron and supporter of Buddhism. The chief sources from which information about his interest in and love for Buddhism may be gathered are the *Milinda Pañho* (Questions of Milinda) and his coins and inscriptions. Reference to him is also found in the *ĀMMK*, the *Divyāvadāna*, *The History of Buddhism* by Tāranātha and Kshemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā*. The Indo-Chinese tradition associates him with a statue of the Buddha in that country. Among the Classical writers Plutarch records an episode which may be taken as a veiled allusion to his Buddhist leanings.

According to the *Milinda Pañho* Menander wanted to understand the true essence of Buddhism. For this he approached many teachers, but none could solve his difficulties and doubts. In his dejection he exclaimed: "Empty, alas, is all India. All India is but vain gossip. There is no ascetic or Brāhmaṇa who is capable of disputing with me and resolving my doubts." It was by a fortunate chance that one day he saw Nāgasena, a Buddhist monk, going on his begging round, whose calm and serene personality made a deep impact on him. Next day with five hundred Yonakas he went to the Saṅkheyya monastery at Sāgala where the monk was staying. They had a conversation which, at the request of the king, was later resumed at the palace. The monk, who was no ordinary teacher, told the king that he was agreeable to a discussion only if it was held in the scholastic way (*Paṇḍitavāda*) and not in the royal way (*Rājavāda*). Accordingly, the king put his difficulties one by one before the sage who solved them to the king's satisfaction. At the end of the conversation, which lasted for some days, the king expressed his gratitude to the monk for resolving his doubts and took refuge in the Triratna. Menander now built a monastery named

[1]This Appendix has been written by Mr. Shankar Goyal, M.A., Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut.

Milinda-vihāra and handed it over to Nāgasena. He also made large donations to the Bhikshu saṅgha. He died a Buddhist monk having retired from the world after handing over his kingdom to his son. He is also said to have attained Arhathood, the last stage of sanctification according to Theravāda Buddhism.

On the dialogue, which Menander had with Nāgasena, is based the *Milinda Pañho*, which is considered to be one of the most outstanding books of the non-canonical Pali literature. In its present form it contains seven chapters. Out of these, the first one is largely personal and historical while others are all doctrinal. Some of the interesting dilemmas discussed in this work are the following : (a) If there is no soul, what is there that takes rebirth ? (b) Why should a perfectly enlightened person, such as the Buddha, suffer and die ? (c) What is meant by Truth ? (d) What is wrong with philosophical discussion ? (e) If life is suffering, why is suicide not a way out ? (f) Why do the virtuous suffer and the wicked prosper ? Doubts are expressed about the god-like character of the Buddha, but the existence of the Buddha is strongly asserted. Psychological theories and various philosophical problems are also discussed. Thus the *Milinda Pañho* is a comprehensive exposition not only of Buddhist metaphysics, but also of Buddhist ethics and psychology. Apart from its importance as a Buddhist text it is also valuable as a historical document and literary achievement. Probably it is the most interesting work of Theravāda Buddhism in prose.[1]

But *Milinda Pañho's* testimony on Menander's relations with Buddhism has been doubted by many. W. W. Tarn[2] believes that the evidence of the *Milinda Pañho* does not indicate that Menander was a Buddhist though he admits that 'no one can prove that Menander was not a Buddhist.' He argues that Menander's adoption of Athena, 'the one Greek deity who was practically never equated with anything Oriental', is against the supposition that Menander adopted Buddhism as his personal faith. Against this Narain[3] points out that though Kanishka depicted many non-Buddhist deities on his coins, and his coins which figure the Buddha are very rare, yet he is regarded as a great Buddhist monarch. But regarding the occurrence of the title *Soter* on Menander's coins, Narain himself argues : "We

[1]Cf. Nakamura, Hajime, *Indian Buddhism* for exhaustive bibliography on the *Milinda Pañho* (pp. 114–15, n. 5).

[2]Tarn, W. W., *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 268 f.

[3]Narain, A. K., *The Indo-Greeks*, p. 97 f.

are unable to understand why the title 'Soter' on Menander's coins meant that he was 'the Saviour' of the Buddhists and of all those who stood for the old Maurya power against the usurper Pushyamitra, when we know how common was this epithet with the Indo-Greek Kings." He may be right. But on a few silver and copper coins of Menander, he is given the title *Dikaiou* (with Kharoshṭhī equivalent *dharmikasa*) and an eight-spoked wheel appears on the obverse of certain pieces. In these features some numismatists find corroborative evidence for Menander's faith in Buddhism. (Cf. Appendix 9).

In the time of Menander the Buddha image had almost certainly not evolved, but it is probable that the wheel on some coins of Menander is connected with Buddhism.[1] Tarn's deduction that the wheel only means that Menander proclaimed himself a *Chakravartin*[2] is not justified. In the opinion of Allan, 'this wheel must have a common origin with the wheel found on the *Pañchanekame* coins and the wheel so familiar on Buddhist sculptures.'[3] Marshall also points out that the wheel was well-established as a Buddhist symbol before the *Pañchanekame* coins were issued.[4] The Shinkot inscription proves beyond doubt that the Greek king helped in the propagation of Buddhism in the region between the Hindukush and the Sindhu. Plutarch records that after Menander died 'the cities celebrated his funeral as usual in other respects, but in respect to his remains they put forth rival claims and only with difficulty came to terms, agreeing that they should divide the ashes equally and go away and should erect monuments to him in all their cities.'[5] If we interpret this passage in Buddhist terms, it means that on the death of Menander the people of his kingdom imitated the example of Buddha's own followers on the death of their Master, and buried the ashes of the dead king under a number of stūpas. It is also interesting to note that a tradition connects Menander with the origin of the most famous statue of the Buddha in Indo-China, the statue of the Emerald Buddha, which Menander's teacher Nāgasena had

[1]Marshall, *Taxila*, i, pp. 33-34; Cf. *Narain*, *op. cit.*

[2]Tarn, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

[3]Allan in Marshall's *Taxila*, ii, p. 859.

[4]Marshall, *Ibid.*

[5]Cf. Sircar, D. C., in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 112-15; Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PHAI*, p. 382; Bapat, P. V. (ed.), *2,500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 198; Goyal, S. R., *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, pp. 185-90.

materialized out of an emerald by his supernatural powers. Under the name Milindra, Menander seems to have been known as a Buddhist to Kshemendra also who, in his *Avadānakalpalatā* refers to a great stūpa built by this king. Tārānātha mentions King Minara of Tukhāradeśa who was converted by the Venerable Dhitika. He may be no other than Menander. His patronage is known to have encouraged the upsurge of Buddhism in Greek India during the last decade of his reign, illustrated by the great delegation of monks which in 137 B. C. went from Alexandria-of-the-Caucasus under the leadership of a Greek teacher to attend the inauguration of the Great stūpa at Anurādhapura in Ceylon. All these facts tend to support the tradition of Menander's faith in Buddhism. It is true that the reference to Milinda becoming a monk under the influence of Nāgasena occurs in the last part of the *Milinda Pañho* which is regarded as a later addition by many authorities, but the Buddhist faith of Milinda is suggested by an earlier passage also at the end of the third Chapter which is accepted on all hands as a part of the original work. Here we find Milinda declaring that he wanted to join the Saṅgha but was prevented from doing so by the large number of his enemies. It is obvious that the king who expressed such a desire could not have failed to be converted to Buddhism as a lay-devotee. The argument that Menander, being a member of the ruling race, could not have adopted the religion of the subject people obviously has no substance. K. P. Jayaswal rightly points out that it is impossible to believe that the *Milinda Pañho* could have been foisted on him if he was not a follower of the faith.[1] As Zimmer puts it, 'If the Greek King was not himself actually a member of the Buddhist Order, he was atleast so great a benefactor that the Community looked upon him as one of their own.'[2]

[1]Cf. also Chattopadhyaya, S., *Early History of North India*, Delhi, 1976, p. 46 f.

[2]Zimmer, H., *Philosophies of India*, New York, 1951.

Appendix 4

KANISHKA AND BUDDHISM

Kanishka I, the great emperor of the Kushāṇa dynasty (acc. 78 A.D.) is one of the most celebrated monarchs of Asia. One of the causes of his fame is his intimate association with Buddhism. The Buddhist legends seek to project him as a sort of another Aśoka. He is credited with convening the Fourth Buddhist Council and constructing a large stūpa near Peshwar. It is on his coins that the figure of the Buddha is found for the first time (App. 9) and it was during his reign that the Gandhāra and Mathurā schools of sculpture reached new heights by producing fine specimens of the images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and Mahāyāna Buddhism became a popular religion. On his conversion to Buddhism—when and how did he adopt the new faith—as well as on his activities as a Buddhist, numismatic, epigraphic and literary sources throw considerable light. But the evidence available is sometimes confusing and the literary evidence is mostly in the form of legends. Here we propose to state and analyse it from various angles.

Numismatic Evidence

A study of the coins of Kanishka suggests that he honoured a variety of Indian, Iranian and Greek deities It has been opined that the diversity of coin-types representing Greek and Zoroastrian deities, Hindu god Śiva and Śākyamuni Buddha, may be explained by the hypothesis that these various types were current in different provinces of the Kushāṇa empire with different religious traditions. If we accept this explanation, then it is quite likely that inspite of his personal faith in Buddhism Kanishka followed the liberal policy of toleration towards other non-Buddhist creeds and faiths. On the other hand, on the basis of the numismatic evidence Cunningham has suggested that the Kanishka's religious life underwent several changes. At the earliest stage, Kanishka preferred the pantheon of the Greeks, next a mixture of Mazdean Fire-worship and Indian

Nature-worship, finally followed by his conversion to Buddhism.[1] Sten Konow thinks that the Peshawar relic casket inscription of Kanishka is dated in his first regular year.[2] If this reading is accepted, then we can hardly assume Kanishka's conversion to Buddhism at a later stage in his life. But Konow's reading of the date is not acceptable to all. However, the achievements of Kanishka as patron of Buddhism do indicate that he became a convert in the faith of Śākyamuni not very much later in his life.[3] Be that as it may, the fact remains that the anthropomorphic representation of Buddha first appears on the coins of Kanishka. In the sculptures of Bodha Gayā and Bharhut, Buddha is symbolically represented by his empty throne, his bowl, his footstools, wheel, the sacred tree or chaitya. His human representation on the coins of Maues as suggested by Tarn or on the coins of Kujula Kadphises as suggested by Smith is doubtful. However, on the gold coins of Kanishka he certainly appears as standing, being accompanied by the Greek legend 'Boddo' (Buddha).[1] The figure again appears on copper coins with Greek legend 'Sakamana Boddo', that is, Śākyamuni Buddha.[5] The image which appears on a well-preserved gold stater in the British Museum is in keeping with the typical Gandhāra style.[6] The evidence of the Buddha type of coins issued by Kanishka is undoubtedly a significant landmark in the history of Buddhist art (cf. App. 9).[7]

Buddhism in Early Kushāṇa Inscriptions

The epigraphs of Kanishka I and of his immediate successors mention different schools of Buddhism. The existence of the schools of the Sarvāstivādins and Mahāsāṅghikas is noticed in the Brāhmī and Kharoshṭhī records of this period. The Mathurā lion capital inscription of the time of Śoḍāsa records the coming of a dialectician (*khalula*) from Nagara (in Jalalabad) to Mathurā to counteract the propagation of the Mahāsāṅghikas. The Kalwan inscription of the year 13 records the deposit of relics for the acceptance of the

[1] *NC*, XII, 3rd Series, p. 45. Cf. Sircar, D. C., *Some Problems of Kuṣāṇa and Rājpūt History*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 17 f.

[2] *Corpus*, II, i, p. 137.

[3] *PHAI*, p. 475.

[4] *BMC*, Pl. XXVI. 8.

[5] *Ibid.*, Pl. XXXII. 3.

[6] *JA*, XXXII, 1903, p. 428.

[7] Chattopadhyay, B., *The Age of the Kushāṇas—a Numismatic Study*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 182 ff.

Sarvāstivādin sect. The Shah-ji-ki-dheri casket inscription refers to the gift of the casket dedicated in Kanishka's Vihāra and Mahāsena's saṅghārāma. Other Kharoshṭhī inscriptions recording dedication for the Sarvāstivādins include those from Zeda and Kurram of the year 11 and 20 respectively of Kanishka's era. Another inscription mentions dedication of Yola Mira Shāhi for the acceptance of the Sarvāstivādins.[1] These inscriptions suggest the existence of Sarvāstivādin establishments in Afghanistan, West Punjab and Sindh. The Brāhmī inscriptions belonging to this school include those of dedications made by Friar Bala at Śrāvastī and also at Sarnath. The statue of a Bodhisattva alongwith a *chhatra* and a *yashṭi* were dedicated at a place where the Buddha used to walk in the Kosambakuṭī, as the property of the Sarvāstivadins. The Sarnath inscriptions of the same donor do not mention the name of the school. A record on the railing surrounding the old stūpa in the south chapel of the main shrine mentions the school of the Sarvāstivadins. Mathurā was of course, the most important place for the Sarvāstivādins. An inscription found on a pedestal of an image records its dedication for the acceptance of the Sarvāstivādins.

The school of the Mahāsāṅghikas had its centres at Mathurā and in Afghanistan. The Mathurā lion capital inscription suggests its strength at Mathurā. The earliest Brāhmī record connected with this school is dated in the year 10 of Kanishka's era. It is recorded on the pedestal of a Bodhisattva image dedicated by Nāgadatta, to the Kraushṭikiya vihāra in the *gandhakuṭī* of his own shrine. The Mahāsāṅghika records include the Palikhera stone bowl inscription, another one recovered from the same place, and a third one from the Matagali at Mathurā. The Wardak inscription of the time of Huvishka dated in the year 51 records the establishment of the relics of Śākyamuni in the Vagramarega Vihāra. Besides these two schools, a solitary Brāhmī record refers to the Dharmaguptikas, the school closely allied to that of the Sarvāstivādins at Mathurā.[2]

Legends Concerning Kanishka's Conversion to Buddhism and Construction by Him of a Stūpa at Peshawar : the Khotanese Version

Now, let us take up the literary evidence. As Kanishka became an

[1] Vide, Puri, B.N., *India Under the Kushāṇas*, 1965, p. 141 ff. Cf. also his paper in *Central Asia in the Kushan Period*, II, Moscow, 1975, p. 183 ff.

[2] *Ibid*., Cf. Sharma, G.R. (ed.), *Kusāṇa Studies*, Allahabad, 1968, p. 43 ff.; cf. also Goyal, S.R., *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṅgraha*, pp. 231-65.

them; he said, 'Who is he who ordered you, saying you should build the Kanishka-stūpa ?'

"At that time those boys changed their form, on foot the four world-regents stood before him. When the king saw those world-regents, trembling greatly, he dismounted from his horse. Before them standing humbly he stood, at their feet with reverence he went for refuge. The world-regents spoke with him, so they said to him, 'Great king, by you according to the Buddha's prophecy is a Saṅghārāma to be built wholly (?) with a large stūpa and hither relics must be invited which the meritorious, good beings dwelling in Jambudvīpa, the deities and protectors, will bring. Whoever may be those beings who by only casting a flower thereon do honour to the stūpa, all those shall take birth in the worlds of the devas; in a moment, they attain to bodhi (illumination) according to the prophecy. And this saṅghārāma shall be named the Kanishka-vihāra.'

"When the king had heard the utterance of the world-regents, than he ordered his ministers to summon architects. So he ordered, 'Assemble many working men. Here in this place begin a saṅghārāma with a pile high as one krośa, and make for it also a dharmarājikā (stūpa), decked with gold, silver, jewels and pearls.' The ministers assembled many working men. There in that place they began the stūpa and saṅghārāma of Kanishka with the dharmarājikā (stūpa)

"At another time the king went with his spiritual adviser Aśagausha (Aśvaghosha) to that working place when they had made the dharmarājikā. At that time Aśagausha (Aśvaghosha), the spiritual adviser, picked up a ball of clay. Such is the act of truth which he made saying, 'If I am to realize the *bodhi* in this present Bhadrakalpa (age) necessarily by the casting of this ball let some unparalleled sign appear.' At once on the casting of the ball, a certain Buddha image appeared as great in thickness and length as was Śākyamuni the Buddha."[1]

Fa-hsien's Version

Fa-hsien, who visited India in the age of Chandragupta Vikramāditya (c. 400 A.D.), narrates a story of the construction of Kanishka's stūpa at Purushapura :

"Going southward from Gandhāra the travellers in four days

[1] *JRAS*, 1942, pp. 19-21.

arrived at the kingdom of Purushapura (Peshawar). Formerly when Buddha was travelling in this country with his disciples he said to Ānanda : 'After my Parinirvāṇa, there will be a king named Kanishka, who shall in this spot build a stūpa.' This Kanishka was afterwards born into this world; and (once) when he had gone forth to took about him, Śakra, ruler of Devas, wishing to excite the idea in his mind, assumed the appearance of a little herd-boy, and was making a stūpa right in the way (of the king), who asked what sort of a thing he was making. The boy said, 'I am making a stūpa for Buddha.' The king said, 'Very good' and immediately, right over the boy's stūpa, he (proceeded to) rear another, which was more than four hundred cubits high, and adorned with layers of all the precious substances of all; the stūpas and temples which (the travellers) saw in their journeyings, there was not one comparable to this in solemn beauty and majestic grandeur. There is a current saying that this is the finest stūpa in Jambudvīpa. When the king's stūpa was completed, the little stūpa (of the boy) came out from its side on the south rather more than three cubits in height."[1]

Buddha's Prophecy as Recorded in a Vinaya Treatise

In a Vinaya treatise, the prediction about the construction of the stūpa by Kanishka is made not to Ānanda but to Vajrapāṇi Pusa :

"The Buddha going about with this Pusa from place to place in North India came to the hamlet of the Ho-shu-lo, that is, Kharjura or wild date tree. Here the two sat down, and the Buddha, pointing to a small boy making a mud stūpa at a little distance, told the Pusa that on that spot Kanishka would erect a stūpa called by his name."[2]

Sung-Yun's Version

Sung-Yun, who came to India in 518 A. D., gives the following legend about the construction of the Kanishka's stūpa[3] :

"Tathāgata was passing through the country with his disciples on his mission of instructing, on which occasion while delivering discourse on the east side of the city, he said, 'Three hundred

[1]Fa-hsien, *Travels*, p. 13 f.

[2]Quoted by Baldev Kumar, *The Early Kuṣāṇas*, p. 91.

[3]*Ibid.*

years after my Nirvāṇa,[1] there will be a king of this country called Ka-ni-si-ka (Kanishka). On this spot he will raise a pagoda (Feou-thou).' Three hundred years after that event there was king Kanishka. On one occasion while going out to the east of the city, he saw four children engaged in making a Buddhist tower out of dung; they had raised it about three feet high, when suddenly they disappeared. The king, surprised at this miraculous event, immediately erected a tower for the purpose of enclosing (the small pagoda), but gradually the small tower grew higher and higher, and at last went outside and removed itself 400 feet off, and there stationed itself. Then the king preceeded to widen the foundation of the Great Tower 300 paces and more. To crown all, he placed a roof-pole upright and even. Throughout the building he used ornamental wood, he constructed stairs to lead to the top. The roof consisted of every kind of wood. Although there were thirteen storeys; above them there was an iron-pillar, 3 feet high with thirteen gilded circles Altogether the height from the ground was 700 feet. This meritorious work being finished, the dung pagoda, as at first, remained three paces south of the Great Tower. The Brahmaṇa, not believing that it was really made of dung, dug a hole in it to see. Although years have elapsed since these events, this tower has not corrupted; and although they have tried to fill up the hole with scented earth, they have not been able to do so. It is now enclosed with protecting, canopy. The Tsioh-li pagoda since its erection had been three times destroyed by lightning, but the kings of the country have each time restored it. The old men say, "When this pagoda is finally destroyed by lightning, the Law of Buddha will also perish. Within, the pagoda contained every sort of Buddhist utensil, here are gold and jewelled (vessels) of a thousand forms and vast variety, to name which even would be no easy task; at sun-rise the gilded discs of the vane are lit up with dazzling glory, while the gentle breeze of the morning causes the precious bells (that are suspended from the roof) to tinkle with a pleasing sound; of all the pagodas of the Western world this one is by far the first (in size and importance). At the first completion of this tower they used true pearls in making the net-work covering over the top; but after some years, the king, reflecting over the enormous value of this ornamental work,

[1]The date given here is obviously wrong.

thought thus within himself, 'After my decease (funeral) I fear some invaders may carry it off'-or 'supposing the pagoda should fall, there will be no one with means sufficient to re-build it'; on which he removed it to the north-west of the pagoda 100 paces, and buried it in the earth. Above the spot he planted a tree, which is called Po-tai (Bodhi), the branches of which, spreading out on each side, with their thick foliage, completely shade the spot from the sun. Underneath the tree on each side there are sitting figures (of Buddha) of the same weight, viz. a chang and a half (17 feet). There are always four dragons in attendance to protect these jewels; if a man (only in his heart) covets them, calamities immediately befall him. There is also a stone erected on the spot and engraved on it are these words of direction, 'Hereafter, if this tower is destroyed, after long search, the virtuous man may find here, pearls (of value sufficient) to help him restore it'."

Yuan Chwang's Version

Yuan Chwang, who came to India in the age of Harshavardhana, gives another version of the story :

"About eight or nine li to the south-east of the capital was a large very ancient sacred Pippal Tree about 100 feet high with wide-spreading foliage affording a dense shade. Under it the past four Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa are to sit here; the images of the four Buddhas in the sitting posture were still to be seen. When Sakya Muni was sitting under this tree with his face to the south he said to Ānanda—'Four hundred years after my decease[1] a sovereign will reign, by name Kanishka who a little to the south of this will raise a stūpa in which he will collect many of my flesh and bone relics.'

"To the south of the Pippal Tree was the stūpa erected by Kanishka. Exactly 400 years after the death of the Buddha Kanishka became sovereign of all Jambudvīpa but he did not believe in Karma, and he treated Buddhism with contempt. When he was hunting in the wild country a white hare appeared; the king gave a chase, and the hare suddenly disappeared at this place. Here among the trees the king discovered a cow-herd boy with a small stūpa three feet high he had made. 'What is this you have made ?' asked the king. The boy replied telling the Buddha's prophecy, and informing Kanishka that he was the king of the prophecy, add-

[1]The date is evidently wrong.

ing that he had come to set in motion the fulfilment of the prophecy. With this the king was greatly pleased; he straightway became a Buddhist, and proceeded to accomplish the prediction. Trusting to his own great merits, he set about building a great stûpa round the site of the boy's small stûpa which was to be concealed and suppressed by the great stûpa. But as the latter rose in height the small stûpa always topped it by three feet. The King's stûpa was one and a half li in circuit at the base, which was 150 feet high in five stages, and the stûpa had reached the height of 400 feet. The boy's stûpa was now suppressed and the king was greatly pleased. He completed his stûpa by the addition of twenty five gilt-copper discs in tiers and having deposited a hoard of relics inside, he proceeded to offer solemn worship. But the small stûpa appeared with one half of it out side-ways under the south-east corner of the great base. The king now lost patience and threw the thing up. So (the small stûpa) remained as it was (i. e. did not come through the wall with one-half of it visible in the stone base below the second stage) and another small stûpa took its place at the original site. Seeing all this the King became alarmed, as he was evidently contending with supernatural powers, so he confessed his error and made submission. These two stûpa were still in existence and were resorted to for cures by people afflicted with diseases. South of the stone steps on the east side of the Great Stûpa were two sculptured stûpas one three and the other five feet high, which were miniatures of the Great Stûpa. There were also two images of the Buddha, one four and the other six feet high representing him seated cross-legged under the Bodhi. When the sun shone on them these images were of a dazzling gold colour, and in the shade their stone was of a dark violet colour. The stone had been gnawed by gold-coloured ants so as to have the appearance of carving and the insertion of gold sand completed the images. On the south face of the ascent to the Great Stûpa was a painting of the Buddha sixteen feet high with two heads from one body. One pilgrim narrates the legend connected with this very curious picture as he learnt it at the place.

"About 100 paces to the south-east of the Great Stûpa was a white-stone standing image of Buddha eighteen feet high facing north, which wrought miracles and was seen by night to circumambulate the Great Stûpa. On either side of the latter were above 100 small stûpas close together. The Buddha images were adorned in the perfection of art. Strange perfumes were perceived and unusual

sounds heard (at the Great Stūpa), and divine and human genii might be seen performing *pradakshiṇā* round it. The Buddha predicted that when the Stūpa had been seven times burnt and seven times rebuilt, his religion would come to an end. The Records of former sages stated that the stūpa had already been erected and destroyed three times. When Yuan Chwang arrived he found there had been another burning, and the work of the building was still in progress.

"To the west of the Great Stūpa was an old monastery built by Kanishka, its upper storey and many terraces were connected by passages to invite eminent Brethren and give distinction to illustrious merit, and although the buildings were in ruins, they could be said to be of rare art.

"In the third tier of high walls of Kanishka-Vihāra was the chamber once occupied by the Venerable Pārśva (Po-li-ssu-fo). It was in ruins at the time, but was marked off. On the east side of Pārśva's chamber was the old house in which Shih-Chin Pusa (Vasubandhu) compossd the *Pi-ta-mo-ku-shi-lun* (*Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra*) and posterity in reverential remembrance had set a mark on this house. About fifty paces south from Vasubandhu's house was the second tier of high walls; here Manoratha wrote a *Vibhāshā-lun*."

Legends Concerning the Fourth Buddhist Council

Yuan Chwang has also given an interesting account of the Buddhist Council held in the reign of Kanishka :

"The Great Council was summoned by Kanishka four hundred years after the decease of the Buddha.[1] He was a great and powerful sovereign whose sway extended to many peoples. In his leisure hours he studied the Buddhist scriptures, having a monk every day in the palace to give him instruction. But as the Brethren taught him different and contradictory interpretations owing to the conflicting tenets of sectarians, the king fell into a state of helpless uncertainty. The Venerable Pārśva explained to His Majesty that in the long lapse of time since Buddha left the world disciples of schools and masters with various theories had arisen all holding personal views and all in conflict. On hearing this the king was greatly moved and expressed to Pārśva his desire to restore Buddhism to eminence and to have Tripiṭaka explained according to the tenets

[1]The date is evidently wrong.

of the various schools. Pārśva gave his cordial approval of the suggestion, and the king thereupon issued summons to the holy and wise Brethren in all his realm. Then came in crowds from all quarters to Gandhāra where they were entertained for seven days. They were too numerous, however, to make a good-working council, so the king had recourse to process of selection. First of all had to go away those who had not entered the saintly career—had not attained to one of the four degrees of perfection. Then of those who remained all who were Arhats (saints) were selected and the rest dismissed. Of the Arhats again those who had "the three-fold intelligence" and "the six-fold penetration" were retained and these were further thinned out by dismissing all of them who were not thoroughly versed in the Tripiṭaka and well learned in the "five sciences." By this process the number of Arhats for the Council was reduced to 499.

"The king proposed Gandhāra as the place of meeting for the Council but this place was objected to on account of its heat and dampness. Then Rājagaha-(Rājagṛha) was proposed, but Pārśva and others objected that there were too many adherents of other sects there, and it was decided to hold the Council in Kashmir. So the king and the Arhats came to this country and here the king built a monastery for the Brethren.

"When the tenents of the Tripiṭaka were collected for the making of expository commentaries on them, the Venerable Vasumitra was outside the door in monk's costume. The other Brethren would not admit him, because he was in the bonds of the world, not an Arhat. In reply to his claim to deliberate, the others told him to go away and come to join them when he attained Arhathood. Vasumitra said he did not value this attainment a spittle, he was aiming at Buddha-hood, and he would not have any petty condition ('go in a small path'), still he could become an Arhat before a silk ball which he threw in the air fell to the ground. When he threw the ball, the Devas (gods) said to him so as to be heard by all, 'Will you here realize the petty fruit ?' The Devas kept the ball, and the Arhats made apologies to Vasumitra and invited him to become their President accepting his decisions on all disputed points.

"This Council composed 100,000 stanzas of *Upadeśa Śāstras* explanatory of the canonical sūtras, 100,000 stanzas of *Vinaya-Vibhāshā-śāstras* explanatory of the Vinaya, and 100,000 stanzas of *Abhidharma-Vibhāshā-śāstras* explanatory of the Abhidharma. For

this exposition of the Tripiṭaka all learning from remote antiquity was thoroughly examined; the general sense and the terse language (of the Buddhist scriptures) were again made clear and distinct, and the learning was widely diffused for the safe guidance of disciples. King Kanishka had the treatises, when finished, written out on copper-plates and enclosed them in stone-boxes, which he deposited in a stūpa made for the purpose. He then ordered the Yakshas (deities) to keep and guard the texts and not allow any to be taken out of the country by heretics; those who wished to study them should do so in the country. When leaving to return to his own country Kanishka renewed Aśoka's gift of all Kashmir to the Buddhist Church."

Tibetan Account of the Third Council

The *Pag-sam-jon-zong* gives the following account of the Council, even though there is some confusion about the name of the king (Kanik) :

"Hearing that he held the Third Buddhist Council in the Kuṇḍalavana Vihāra, the Kashmirians tell this story. But the general belief is that there assembled in the monastery of Kushāṇa in Jalandhara 500 Arhats above the rank of Srotā-panna and about 5,000 ordinary monks. The teachings of the Buddha as prophesied in Kriki's dream were arranged. The last Council was held. The Tripiṭakas particularly the Vinaya which was formerly not put in writing were now revised. Kanishka's son too in his palace called Rgas-Iden maintained 10,000 monks headed by 100 venerables for 5 years, and helped in the preparation of many volumes of the Buddhist scripture."[1]

Analysis of the Evidence

If shorn of the miraculous elements, the above legends may be regarded as seeking to establish the following points :

(1) According to the Buddhist belief the conversion of Kanishka took place much in the same manner in which Aśoka was converted more than three hundred years earlier. Like Aśoka Kanishka was also a ruthless conqueror and was responsible for killing hundreds of thousands of people in the course of his conquests. Aśvaghosha caused the king to see the torments of hell for his sins. The king was terrified, repented and became a Buddhist. This similarity

[1]*PASB*, 1910, p. 480.

of circumstances of the conversion of the two monarchs has led many historians to doubt the story of Kanishka's conversion. Here it may be noted that the Khotanese account of conversion differs from the one given by Yuan Chwang. Yuan Chwang states that Kanishka met a cow-herd boy in the wild country where he had gone for hunting, that the boy had made small stūpa, that he was told by the boy about Buddha's prophecy regarding the construction of a stūpa by him, and that he became a Buddhist at once. But Yuan Chwang's version cannot be readily accepted. The Khotanese version is much more realistic stating that the conversion of Kanishka was not accidental but was brought about gradually by his spiritual advisers.

(2) Kanishka won great fame by constructing the stūpa which was regarded as a wonder of the world for many centuries and was visited by Buddhist pilgrims from many countries. The person who gave Kanishka the idea of constructing the stūpa has been differently named. According to Fa-hsien, it was Śakra, who had assumed the appearance of a little herd-boy. But Yuan Chwang calls him a mere cowherd-boy who had constructed a small stūpa to excite such an idea in the king's mind. The Khotanese text makes the four world-regents appear before Kanishka in the form of four young boys engaged in constructing a stūpa, and when asked who ordered them to do that work, they assume their real form and tell him about Buddha's prophecy.

The Great Stūpa was made of ornamental wood and had stairs leading to the top. The stūpa was one and a half li (1,385 feet) in circuit at the base and was 150 feet high in five stages. The height of the stūpa was, according to Yuan Chwang, 400 feet. There were thirteen storeys, above which there was an iron pillar, thirty feet high with thirteen gilded circlets. It required great skill and ingenuity for the heavy iron pillar to be raised to its position, and a lofty stage had to be erected at the four corners for the purpose. Great treasures were spent on this work, and prayers were offered before its completion. There is some difference of opinion regarding the height of the building: Fa-hsien gives the height as more than 400 cubits (600 feet), Sung-Yun as 700 feet, while some other writers make the total height 550, 632, 743, 800 or 1000 feet. Fa-hisen and Yuan Chwang seem to be approximately correct in their estimate; for the height of the base was 150 feet, of the thirteen storeys 400 feet and of the iron pillar thirty feet, making the total height of the structure 580 feet.

The stūpa contained relics of the Buddha and gold and jewelled vessels of a thousand forms and vast variety. It was considered to have miraculous powers of enlightening those who honoured it. The stūpa was attached to a monastery called Kanishka Vihāra. The buildings of the Vihāra served as the residential quarters of Pārśva, of Vasubandhu and of Manoratha in later times. The pagoda was destroyed many times by lightning and fire, but was rebuilt. Sung-Yun, who visited it in the 6th century, states that it had been three times destroyed by lightning but had been restored. Yuan Chwang, who visited it in the 7th century, found that it had been recently burnt and that the work of re-building it was still in progress. From Alberūrī, who wrote in the first quarter of the 11th century, it appears that the Kanishka Vihāra still existed during that period. According to him, "One of the series of kings was Kanishka, the same who is said to have built the Vihāra (Buddhist monastery) of Purushapura. It is called after him Kanik-Chaitya." The site of the stūpa has been successfully excavated by Dr. Spooner who found a metal casket and within it the Buddhist relics enclosed in a reliquary of rock crystal.[1] The casket is some 7 inches high with a diameter of nearly 5 inches. The Kharoshṭhī inscription on it states : "In the year—of (the Mahārāja) Kanishka, in the town... ima, connected with...mansion, this religious gift—may it be for the welfare and happiness of all beings,—the slave Agiśala was the architect,—in Kanishka's Vihāra, in Mahāsena's Saṅghārāma in the acceptance of the Sarvāstivādin teachers." The date given in the inscription for the construction of the stūpa is illegible. The name Agiśila of the architect probably represents a corruption of the Greek name Agesilaus.

(3) Some aspects of Yuan Chwang's account of the Fourth Council are rather fanciful. For example, his statement may be true that finding the original assembly of Buddhist scholars who had come to take part in it something too unwieldy, Kanishka resorted to the method of selecting the best among them. But the manner in which Vasumitra was selected as the President seems to be an outcome of Yuan Chwang's imagination. The story of his selection bears a close resemblance to the story about Ānanda at the First Buddhist Council, in which Ānanda had been refused admission in the first instance on account of his failure to attain Arhathood

[1] *JRAS*, 1909, pp. 1056–61.

which he actually reached on the eve of the session of the Council.

There is also some controversy regarding the meeting place of the Council. Some authorities aver that the Council met in the Kuṇḍalavana Vihāra in Kashmir, while others place its meeting in the Kuvana monastery at Jalandhara. Tāranātha observes that most authorities favour the latter view. But Yuan Chwang, who gives a detailed account of the circumstances leading to the selection of Kashmir and not Gandhāra or Rājagṛha for this purpose, does not mention the present Jalandhara in this connection. Similarly, while describing his visit to Jalandhara (She-lan-ta-la), he makes no reference to the meeting of the Council there.

There are some other references to the Council in many other ancient accounts, but some of them do not mention Kanishka specifically in this connection. For example Paramārtha ascribes the summoning of the Assembly to Kātyāyanīputra, author of the *Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra*. According to him, Aśvaghosha was invited from Sāketa of the Śrāvastī province for the purpose of applying his well-known literary skill to the redaction of commentaries drafted by the Council. But there is no doubt that the Council was summoned by Kanishka and that Yuan Chwang's account represents, in the main, the correct picture.

The copper-plates on which the treatises were inscribed or the stūpa in which they were deposited have not been discovered so far. But the Abhidharma literature consisting of seven books, one principal (*Jñānaprasthāna*) and six supplementary, were widely studied in Kashmir, the seat of this school. The *Mahāvibhāshā*, and the *Vibhāshā* commentaries on the *Jñānaprasthāna* have been wholly lost in Sanskrit, but are still preserved in Chinese.

There is no mention by Yuan Chwang and the Tibetan chronicles of the language in which the treatises were compiled by the Council. But the association of Aśvaghosha, the great Sanskrit scholar, with the work of the composition suggests that Sanskrit was the medium employed for this purpose. Aśvaghosha was originally a Brāhmaṇa but was later on converted to Buddhism by Pārśva. He is famous for his *Buddhacharita*, *Sūtrālaṁkāra*, *Sāriputraprakaraṇa* and *Saundarananda*. A systematic work on the Mahāyāna philosophy called *Śraddhotpāda śāstra*, which is found in Chinese translation is also attributed to him.[1] His association

[1]Cf. Nakamura, Hajime, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987, p. 133 f.

with the Council may, therefore, be regarded as proof of the use of Sanskrit for the works composed by the Council. A Buddhist scholar named Ghoshaka, a Tukhāra, took an active part in the Council of Kanishka and made his contribution towards the compilation of *Vibhāshā*, a commentary on the *Abhidharmapiṭaka* of the Sarvāstivāda School.[1] It also proves that Sanskrit was the language used in the Council.

Thus the extant evidence proves that Kanishka was not only a great patron of Buddhism but was also associated with a galaxy of Buddhist teachers. He also encouraged Buddhist missionary activities abroad. Buddhist tradition, bearing testimony to this, tells us : "He gave patronage to and spread the teachings of the Buddha in India, Shu-lei (Kashgar), Kuei-tseu (Kucha), Ni-pa-lei (Nepāla), Chen-tan (Chīnasthāna, China), Ta-li (Yunan) Si-hia and other countries."[2] The tradition is confirmed by the fact that Indians and Yüeh-chi people settled in Kashgar, Khotan, Cher-chen and Tun-huang. It has rightly been suggested that under the patronage of the Buddhist monarch Kanishka the monks from Balkh and Samarkand traversed the silk-route to China through Ser-India and spread Buddhism in the greater part of Asia.[3]

[1]Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 128.

[2]Bagchi, P. C., *Sino-Indian Studies*, II, pp. 156–56.

[3]For the relationship of the Kushāṇas with Mahāyāna Vide Zelinsky, in *Central Asia in the Kushan Period*, Pt. II, Moscow, 1975, p. 235 f.

Appendix 5

THE TWO VASUBANDHUS AND THE GUPTAS

The problem of the date of Vasubandhu, the famous Buddhist author and the connected question of the identity of the Gupta sovereigns with whom he had intimate relations, have given occasions to voluminous discussion. According to Noel Peri,[1] Smith,[2] Macdonell,[3] Winternitz,[4] Majumdar[5] etc. he flourished in the fourth century A.D., while Takakusu,[6] Wogihara,[7] Hoernle[8] and several others hold that he lived in the fifth century A.D. Frouwallner[9] analysed the arguments advanced by the protagonists of the rival theories and came to the conclusion that there flourished two scholars of the name of Vasubandhu, the elder one in the fourth century and the younger one in the fifth century. The Elder Vasubandhu (c. 320-80 A.D.) was the brother of Asanga and belonged to Peshawar. It was he who was the contemporary of Harivarman and whose works were translated by Kumārajiva in 404 and 405 A.D.[10] This Vasubandhu was different from Vasubandhu the Younger, the author of the *Abhidharmakosha*, who was the disciple of Buddhamitra[11] and was appointed, according to Paramārtha, by

[1]Peri, Noel, A propos de la Date de Vasubandhu, *BEFEO*, 1911, p. 339 ff.; his arguments have been briefly summarized by Smith in his *EHI*, p. 325 ff.

[2]*EHI*, 3rd ed., p. 325 ff.

[3]Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, 1961, p. 327.

[4]Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, II, p. 335 f.

[5]*NHIP*, p. 155. Also by Basak, *HNEI*, p. 33; Vidyabhusan, S. C., *JASB*, 1905, p. 227; Bhattacharya, Binoyatosh, *Tattvasaṁgraha*, Intro., p. 66 ff.

[6]Takakusu, J., *JRAS*, 1905, p. 33 ff.

[7]*ERE*, XII, pp. 595-96.

[8]*JRAS*, 1909, p. 102; *IA*, 1911, p. 264. Also by K. B. Pathak, *IA*, 1911, p. 170 f.; Allan, *BMC*, *GD*, p. 51 f.

[9]Frouwallner, E., *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of Law Vasubandhu*, Rome, 1951.

[10]Vide, Goyal, Shankar, 'Kumārajiva: The Yuan Chwang of India', *JRIHR*, Jaipur, XIV, No. 2, 1977, pp. 38-40.

[11]A Buddhist monk Buddhamitra is mentioned in the Mankuwar Buddhist image inscription of the Gupta year 129 (448 A.D.). K. B. Pathak indentifies him with Buddhamitra, the teacher of Vasubandhu (*IA*, 1912, p. 244).

Vikramāditya, the king of Ayodhyā, the tutor of his crown-prince Bālāditya. According to Frouwallner, Paramārtha, the author of the *Life of Vasubandhu* or his disciples identified these two scholars of the same name by mistake and thus caused this great confusion.

Frouwallner's brilliant suggestion reconciles almost all the apparently contradictory evidences on the question of the date of Vasubandhu. It also helps us in solving the equally puzzling question of the identify of the royal patrons of these two great scholars. Now, from the testimony of Paramārtha it is clear that it was Vasubandhu the Younger, who was patronised by Vikramāditya and Bālāditya. But a half verse cited by Vāmana from a work of possibly Gupta age states that :

> This very son of Chandragupta, the young Chandraprakāśa, the patron of men of letters, fortunate in the success of his efforts, has now become king.[1]

The commentator explains that the phrase 'patron of men of letters' is an instance of 'allusion', containing a reference to the ministership (*sāchivya*) of Vasubandhu.[2] It is quite obvious that this Vasubandhu could not have been Vasubandhu the Younger ; he, therefore, should have been Vasubandhu the Elder, who flourished in the fourth century A. D. It agrees perfectly well with the suggestion that the Chandragupta, referred to in the above quotation is identical with Chandragupta I, the father of Samudragupta. It may be noted that in his Prayāga *praśasti* Samudragupta is described as a great patron of learning.[3] Thus, it would appear that the patrons of Vasubandhu the Younger, viz. Vikramāditya and Bālāditya[4]

[1]Vāmana, *Kavyālaṅkārasūtravṛitti*, 3.2.2.

[2]*Ibid.;* there is some doubt as to the reading of the name of Vasubandhu in this passage. However, Smith, Pathak, Hoernle, Allan, Frouwallner and many others accept the reading 'Vasubandhu'.

[3]The tradition regarding the patron of Vasubandhu as recorded by Yuan Chwang is somewhat confused. On different occasions he refers to Vikramāditya and Bālādityarāja, the adversary of Mihirakula, but does not mention either of them as the patron of Vasubandhu. He was aware of the tradition that the king to whom Vasubandhu came, was a great patron of learning ; but according to him it was this king to whom Vikramāditya had lost his kingdom (Watters, *Travels*, p. 211 f.) It appears that here the legend regarding the victory of Samudragupta, the patron of Vasubandhu, over Kācha, his rival brother, has got mixed up with the legend regarding the patronage of Vasubandhu by Vikramāditya.

[4]The kings Vikramāditya and Bālāditya mentioned by Paramārtha have been identified with Skandagupta and Narasiṁhagupta by Takakusu, Wogihara,

were different from Chandragupta I and his son Samudragupta, the patron of Vasubandhu the Elder. But Paramārtha, who flourished in the sixth century A. D., when the separate personalities of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta etc. were gradually being merged in the Vikramāditya legend, naturally found it difficult to distinguish between Samudragupta and Skandagupta, who, according to his knowledge, were not only famous by the same title but had patronized a scholar of the same name of Vasubandhu.

Pathak and Frouwallner (*op. cit.*), with Purugupta and Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya by Allan (*op. cit.*) and Sinha (*DKM*, p. 81), with Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I by H. P. Sastri (*JRASB*, 1905, p. 253), and with Chandragupta II and Govindagupta by D. R. Bhandarkar (*I.A*, 1911, p. 15) and Saletore (*Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 28).

Appendix 6

WAS HARSHA PERSONALLY A BUDDHIST?

Harsha's Religion Before He Met Yuan Chwang

Harsha and Buddhism : the Problem

Harsha is famous as one of the greatest Buddhist rulers of ancient India. It is generally believed that from the point of view of his devotion to and services for Buddhism he was second only to Aśoka. According to V. A. Smith he 'obviously set himself to imitate Aśoka' so that the narrative of his doings in the later years of his reign reads like a copy of the history of the great Maurya.'[1] G. S. Chatterji believes that it was the reaction to the religious atmosphere of the reign of Harsha that produced scholars like Kumārila and Śaṅkara.[2] L. M. Joshi has described Harsha as 'the greatest lay Buddhist of the seventh century.'[3] It is also usually held that Harsha's interest in Buddhism, which was quite mild in his youth, acquired more and more intensity with the passage of time ultimately leading to his complete, almost fanatic, devotion to the Mahāyāna form of this religion. According to R. C. Majumdar, after meeting the Chinese pilgrim, he became an 'extreme partisan of Buddhism.'[4] According to R. S. Tripathi though 'he maintained the eclectic character of his public worship' he became so much infatuated with the adopted religion that he did not hesitate to show 'some amount of open partiality and narrow sectarian spirit for the Mahāyāna.'[5] The Polish scholar M. C. Byrski probably echoes the normally accepted opinion of modern scholarship when he states that "strongly influenced by him (that is by Rājyavardhana II, his elder brother) Harṣa inclined towards Buddhism although he was still officially

[1]Smith, *EHI*, (4th ed., Oxford), 1962, p. 357.
[2]Chatterji, G. S., *Harshavardhana* (in Hindi, Allahabad, 1950), p. 431.
[3]Joshi, L.M., *Studies*, p. 33.
[4]Majumdar, in *CA*, p. 119.
[5]Tripathi, *HK*, p. 164.

recognized as a Śivaite. For this reason it was not until after his sister's recovery that he declared: "*iyam tu grahiṣyati mamaiva samam samāptakṛtyena kaṣāyān*" and invited a Buddhist monk Divākaramitra to be their "*guru*" . . . when giving villages or awards he remembered Brahmins and non-Mahāyānists. But always they were in a minority and in a secondary position. . . . Also every year in Kānyakubja great numbers of *śramaṇas* gathered for public discussion in which Harṣa took an active part. But everywhere and always Buddha was the first among the gods and his Mahāyāna followers among the followers of other creeds. Harṣa's piety was so great that for the sake of Buddha's tooth, a relic hidden in one of the Kashmirian temples he was ready to declare war and for the sake of Hiuen Tsang's earlier arrival he risked his alliance with Kāmarūpa. At last in Kānyakubja under the presidentship of Hiuen-Tsang, a *Mahāmokṣapariṣad* took place." Byrski even imagines that though "Harṣa was not intolerant, and, as far as we know he never persecuted "heretics", but the last days of his reign were marked by a lack of balance in his religious policy which created a very unhealthy atmosphere in his kingdom. Taking into consideration the uneasy condition at the end of his reign, we can justifiably suspect that he was murdered, especially as such an attempt had taken place earlier. He was a strong personality but due to the lack of balance in his religious policy he was unable to create a lasting state . . . In conclusion we must state that he was not a very skilful politician because he treated his personal religious inclination as the only appropriate bases for his state policy."[1] Other scholars *mutatis mutandis* agree with such a general assessment of Harsha's *personal* religion.[2]

Thus, according to the view generally accepted by scholars Harsha, who was already greatly interested in Buddhism, definitely adopted it as his personal faith after meeting Yuan Chwang and permitted his policies to be influenced by his personal religious inclination towards Buddhism. His interest in Buddhism, therefore, is divisible into two broad phases: (i) the earlier phase, when he was interested in this religion but had not accepted it as his personal faith, and (ii) the later phase, when after coming into contact with

[1]Byrski, M. C., 'Some Remarks about king Harṣavardhana Śilāditya', *Bhārati*, 5, i, pp 77–80.

[2]Cf. Chatterji, *op. cit.*, p. 253; Mookerji, *Harsha*, p. 183; Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

Yuan Chwang, he became its 'extreme partisan' anu accepted it as his *personal* religion.

We, however, beg to differ. We feel that the entire theory of Harsha's *personal* belief in Buddhism is questionable.[1] It is primarily based on the testimony of Yuan Chwang, though some other sources are also pressed into its service. But, as we will see, the testimony of Yuan Chwang needs greater critical scrutiny than has been accorded to it so far. However, before we examine its general credibility, let us examine what do our sources depose about the religious inclination of Harsha before he met the Chinese pilgrim.

Positive Evidence Proving Harsha's Faith in Śaivism

The most reliable testimony for the personal religion of Harsha is provided by the *Harshacharita* of Bāṇa, the court-biographer of Harsha, and the Madhuban and Banskhera copper plates which positively state that he was a devotee of Śiva. According to the *Harshacharita* the janapada of Śrīkaṇṭha and its royal family were famous for the worship of Sūrya and Śiva. Harsha's remote ancestor Pushyabhūti 'entertained a great, almost inborn, devotion towards Śiva, the adorable,'[2] while according to the Madhuban[3] and Banskhera[4] copper plates Harsha's father Prabhākaravardhana, grandfather Ādityavardhana and great-grandfather Rājyavardhana I were votaries of Sūrya or Āditya. According to the *Harshacharita* also, Prabhākaravardhana was an ardent devotee of the Sun.[5] According to Bāṇa the people of Śrīkaṇṭha janapada, however, were greatly devoted to the worship of Lord Sthāṇu, the local name of Śiva.[6] Yuan Chwang also probably refers to the Śaivite inclinations of the people of Thanesar when he states that they were 'greatly devoted to the magical arts and highly prized outlandish accomplishment.'[7] He also notes that while there were only 'three Buddhist monasteries with above 700 professed Buddhists', the number of Deva temples

[1]For details vide Goyal, S. R., *Harsha and Buddhism*, Meerut, 1986; cf. also Goyal, *Harsha Śīlāditya*, Ch. 9, Meerut, 1987.

[2]Cowell, E. B. and Thomas, F. W., *Harṣa-Carita of Bāṇa* (Delhi, 1968), p. 84.

[3]*Epigraphia Indica*, I, pp. 67–68.

[4]*Ibid.*, IV, pp. 208–11.

[5]*HC*, p. 104.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 85.

[7]Watters, T., *Travels*, I, p. 314; Beal, S., *Records*, I, p. 183 f.

was more than 100 and the non-Buddhists were 'numerous.'[1] No wonder if Harsha was inclined towards Śaivism from his early youth.

The evidence of Harsha's personal devotion for Śiva is quite copious. When he started on his campaign he 'had with deep devotion offered worship to the adorable Nīlalohita.'[2] The golden seal presented to him by the village notary at the time of his first halt was inscribed with the emblem of bull (Nandī), the *vāhana* of the Lord Śiva.[3] The testimony of the *Harshacharita* is confirmed by the Sonepat copper seal of Harsha on which the reclining Nandī symbol is depicted.[4] In the two fragmentary seals of Harsha discovered in the Nālandā excavations we have the following inscription :[5]

Paramamāheśvaraḥ
Maheśvara iva Sārvabhaumaḥ Paramabhaṭṭāraka
Mahārājādhirāja Harshaḥ

Similarly on the reverse of the gold coin of Harsha, published in 1965 by K. D. Bajpai, Śiva and Pārvatī are shown as seated on Nandī.[6] In the *Harshacharita*, Harsha's devotion to Śiva manifests itself also when he compliments the King of Kāmarūpa through the latter's envoy saying, 'to whom save Śiva need he pay homage? This resolve of his increases my affection.'[7]

Thus, the evidence of the *Harshacharita* positively proves that at least till the composition of this work Harsha was a Śaiva. The date of the composition of this work is not definitely known, but it was composed certainly quite long after the accession of Harsha, for it refers to his successful raids in Sindh and the 'land of snowy mountains.'[8] If it was composed towards the end of the reign of Harsha, it will prove that he remained a Śaiva till the last years of his life. It will be quite in keeping with the thesis propounded in the present work. However, despite the temptation of accepting this view for

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *HC*, p. 197.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 198.
[4] Fleet, J. F., *Corpus*, III, No. 52.
[5] *ASI, AR, Eastern Circle*, 1917-18, p. 44; *JNSI*, XXVII, p. 105.
[6] *JNSI*, XXVII, Pt. I, p. 104.
[7] *HC*, p. 219.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

strengthening our theory, we personally feel that its composition took place in c. 620 A.D. for the reason given elsewhere.[1]

But the most important testimony which conclusively proves that Harsha was personally a Śaiva, and not a Buddhist, is that of his own copper plates—the Banskhera plate[2] of the year 22 (=628 A.D.) and Madhuban plate[3] of the year 25 (=631 A.D.)—which definitely call him a Paramamāheśvara or 'a devout worshipper of the Lord Śiva.' Here it should be kept in mind that in these records the ancestors of Harsha upto his father Prabhākaravardhana have been described as the worshippers of Āditya (=Sun) and his brother Rājyavardhana II is called a Paramasaugata or 'a great devotee of the Buddha.' Therefore the description of Harsha in the documents of his own as a Paramamāheśvara, in juxtaposition to the description of his predecessors as worshippers of Āditya and the Buddha, should be regarded as a conclusive proof that till 631 his personal religion was Śaiva; he had not become a Buddhist by that date.[4]

Arguments Usually Advanced in Favour of the Theory of Harsha's Personal Interest in Buddhism Before He Met Yuan Chwang

Despite the evidences cited above most scholars believe that Harsha was personally interested in Buddhism even before he met Yuan Chwang. These arguments may be summarised as follows:

(i) According to R. S. Tripathi 'Harsha's protracted campaigns of violence and bloodshed, his fondness for his dead brother Rājyavardhana, a "paramasaugata", and his association with his sister Rājyaśrī, also an earnest Buddhist, simulated his interest in Buddha's gospel of peace and non-violence.'[5]

(ii) Harsha was probably influenced by Divākaramitra,[6] a Buddhist monk and 'boy friend of the deceased Grahavarman',[7] the husband of Rājyaśrī. For, in the *Harshacharita* it is said that Harsha had invited Divākaramitra to stay with him and Rājyaśrī

[1]See Goyal, S. R., 'The Date of the Harshacharita of Bāṇa', *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Calcutta, XVIII, No. 4, pp. 246–49; *Harsha and Buddhism*, Meerut, 1986, pp. 143–149.

[2]*Epigraphia Indica*, IV, pp. 208–11.

[3]*Ibid.*, I, pp. 67–75.

[4]Incidentally it should be noted that these copper plates record the grants of Harsha made in favour of Brāhmaṇas, and not Buddhists.

[5]Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

[6]Chatterji, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

[7]*HC*, p. 233.

promising that "when I have accomplished my design, she and I will assume the red garments together."[1] According to the Polish scholar M. C. Byrski he even 'invited' Divākaramitra 'to be their *guru*'[2] Led by such passages Cowell and Thomas, the translators of the *HC*, have also remarked: "Harṣa's partiality for Buddhists and Buddhist doctrines is frequently brought out in our story . . . he seems indeed to be more than half a Buddhist at heart."[3]

(iii) Harsha's interest in Buddhism is also reflected in the *Nāgānanda*, a play composed by him on a Buddhist theme.[4]

(iv) According to Yuan Chwang when the statesmen of Kanauj offered the crown of the kingdom to Harsha, he referred the matter to the statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. It shows that even at that early stage of his career he was inclined towards Buddhism.[5]

(v) Harsha forcibly appropriated the tooth-relic of the Buddha from Kashmir and subsequently enshrined it in a saṅghārāma in Kanauj As this event occurred before Yuan Chwang's meeting with him, it may be taken as a mark of his leanings towards Buddhism before he came into contact with the pilgrim.[6]

(vi) Once, when he was yet to meet Yuan Chwang, Harsha sent for four eminent doctors from the Nālandā convent to overthrow in discussion the upholders of the Hīnayāna system in Orissa.[7] It is also indicative of his fondness for Buddhism even before he had met Yuan Chwang.

(vii) According to Yuan Chwang Harsha erected 'on the banks of the river Ganges several thousand stūpas. . . .On all spots where there were holy traces (*of Buddha*) he raised *saṅghārāmas*.'[8]

(viii) According to Yuan Chwang Harsha 'practised to the utmost the rules of temperance, and sought to plant the tree of religious merit to such an extent that he forgot to sleep or eat. He forbade the slaughter of any living thing or flesh as food throughout the Five Indies on pain of death without pardon. . .in all the highways of the towns and villages throughout India he erected hospices

[1]*HC*, p. 258.
[2]*Bharati*, V (Varanasi, 1961-62), p. 77.
[3]*HC*, Preface, pp. xii-xiii.
[4]*HK*, p. 181.
[5]Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[6]*HK*, p. 165.
[7]Beal, S., *The Life of Hiuen Tsiang*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 159-61.
[8]*Records*, I, p. 214.

(*puṇyaśālās*), provided with food and drink, and stationed there physicians, with medicines for travellers and poor persons round about to be given without any stint.'[1] It is argued that these measures, have a distinct Buddhist flavour, and remind one of the benevolent institutions of Aśoka and prove Harsha's predilection for Buddhism.

Weaknesses of These Arguments

To the best of our knowledge, the points enumerated above include every argument which various scholars have advanced from time to time in favour of the theory of Harsha's personal interest in Buddhism. But may we submit that apart from the fact that majority of these points are based on the evidence of Yuan Chwang alone (which, as we will show below, is highly coloured and should not be accepted blindly), they also do not themselves prove that Harsha was a Buddhist; it is their interpretation in the light of the presumption that Harsha was a Buddhist that they in turn strengthen this presumption? We will analyse them in detail later on; here we only wish to point out that actually there is nothing in most of these points which cannot be explained without presuming Harsha's *personal* attachment for Buddhism. We should not forget that kings and people in ancient India were usually extremely tolerant in religious matters. In the same family different individuals could profess different religions and kings had no hesitation in helping liberally the members and organisations of the faiths other than their own. Every student of ancient Indian history knows it; it is not necessary to cite examples. Therefore, we submit that the question of Harsha's *personal* faith should not be confused with his benefactions in favour of this or that religion. As is obvious, many of these arguments are merely 'opinions' of modern scholars. For example, it is only the opinion of R. S. Tripathi that the 'mighty religious transformation' in Harsha's life leading to the adoption of Buddhism as his *personal* religion was brought about by his fondness for his brother Rājyavardhana and sister Rājyaśrī; there is nothing to prove or disprove this assumption. One should remember that Rājyavardhana was murdered when Harsha was only sixteen years old and Rājyaśrī was only fourteen years when, as a result of the murder of her husband Grahavarman, she went to live with Harsha. She was too young to create any impact on the religious beliefs of Harsha.

[1]*Ibid.*

The suggestion that protracted campaigns of Harsha led him towards the non-violent creed of the Buddha is also a matter of personal opinion; and is fallacious too. If it is supposed that protracted wars are incompatible with belief in Buddhism, then one can easily conclude that Harsha never became a Buddhist, for he was waging wars of conquest as late as 642,[1] and there is no evidence to show that he gave them up after this date. And if it is assumed that faith in Buddhism and waging war are not incompatible with each other, then how can one argue that protracted wars made Harsha a believer in the religion of Śākyamuni? If Rājyavardhana, a Buddhist, could become inflamed with anger when he heard the news of the murder of his brother-in-law and at once set out to punish the evil-doer,[2] then how can one argue that Harsha became attracted towards Buddhism because of his protracted wars?

The supposed influence of the Buddhist sage Divākaramitra over Harsha is also a matter of personal opinion. Harsha met him for the first time when he was roaming in search of Rājyaśrī. The sage is mentioned in no other source and nowhere else in the *Harshacharita*. However, Divākaramitra was a boyhood friend of Rājyaśrī's deceased husband; it was, therefore, but natural for Harsha to request him to accompany them in order to 'comfort' his sister with his 'righteous discourses.'[3] His promise that 'At the end, when I have accomplished my design, she and I will assume the red garments together'[4] was also apparently made to console Rājyaśrī. He is not known to have made any attempt to fulfil it. Here it may be noted that according to Bāṇa only a few days earlier than this Harsha had evidenced his personal faith in Śaivism when he worshipped Nīlalohita and in his conversation with Haṃsavega, the envoy of Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa. Instead of assuming the red garments, he later on entered the *gṛhastha āśrama*[5] and throughout his life followed a career of wars and conquests. Actually such a promise given by a sixteen year old king to his recently widowed sister of fourteen years, should not be taken as having been made in earnestness, specially when we know that in his later life he did not do anything to fulfil it. The argument of Dasharatha

[1] *CA*, p. 106.
[2] *HC*, pp. 174–75.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Note that the king of Valabhi was his son-in-law (*Travels*, II, p. 246).

Sharma that 'time no doubt never permitted Harsha to implement his resolution' of becoming a monk 'after punishing his brother's murderer'[1] is patently wrong. Harsha got ample time to fulfil his promise. He made this promise in 606 and lived upto at least 646. Śaśāṅka was dead long before 646 (probably two decades earlier) and Harsha, instead of becoming a monk, is seen fighting wars in Orissa and Maharashtra as late as 643.

The contention of Byrski that Harsha had accepted Divākaramitra as his *guru*, is baseless. Addressing sages and saints of whatever faith as one's *guru* was a form of etiquette of those days.[2] In his conversation with both Yuan Chwang and Śīlabhadra of Nālandā, Harsha called himself their 'disciple.' Same was the case of Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa who, though a Śaiva by faith, presented himself to both Śīlabhadra and Yuan Chwang as their 'disciple.' He called himself a 'disciple' of Śīlabhadra even when he wrote a threatening letter to him.[3] Therefore, to argue that Harsha had accepted Divākaramitra as his *guru* simply because he addressed him as such is not only against his own declaration that he was a Śaiva, but also betrays gross ignorance of ancient Indian etiquette. Would it not be too credulous to assume that Harsha accepted Divākaramitra, who could hardly have been an old man,[4] as his *guru* the same day he met him?

Much has been made of the fact that Harsha wrote *Nāgānanda*, a play with a Buddhist theme. But if we have to determine the nature of the personal religion of Harsha purely on the basis of his plays one should conclude that he was a Śaiva, for he sang the glory of Śiva in two of his plays—the *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā*—and of the Buddha in only one—the *Nāgānanda*. It will be highly illogical to regard him as a Buddhist on the basis of the evidence of the *Nāgānanda* alone, disregarding the testimony of the *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā* altogether. We, however, feel that this entire line

[1] *IHQ*, XXXII, nos. 2 and 3, p. 168 f.

[2] Bāṇa explains this psychology by putting these words in the mouth of Harsha: "who would not shew respect to a *muni*? And, again, religious asceticism, fit mate to virtue, causes honour to be paid even to a fool,—still more to a wise man who wins the hearts of all men." (*HC*, p. 233).

[3] *Life*, pp. 170–71.

[4] Divākaramitra was the boyhood friend of Grahavarman, who in turn was the deceased husband of fourteen years old Rājyaśrī. Therefore, Divākaramitra could hardly have been an old man at the time he met sixteen years old Harsha.

of reasoning is fallacious, for in ancient India, authors did not pick up a theme for composing a play or a *kāvya* only when it corresponded to their own religious beliefs. Kālidāsa sang the eulogy of Rāma in his *Raghuvaṁśa* and of Śiva in his *Kumārasambhava*. Moreover one should remember that even in the *Nāgānanda* it is the goddess Gaurī (Girijā), the wife of Śiva, who plays significant role in the story of the drama. Harsha makes his personal religious inclination obvious when he selects the Gaurī temple as the place where the hero and heroine met for the first time. His attitude becomes clearer when towards the end of the drama Gaurī plays the role of the most notable divine agency and turns the tragedy into comedy by reviving its hero Jīmūtavāhana and making and anointing him a *chakravartin* ruler.[1] The fact that the term *bodhisattva* has been used for the hero, also does not make the play a Buddhist one, for by definition a bodhisattva is any one (any being, even an animal) who devotes his life to the service of others—he need not to be a Buddhist at all.

Yuan Chwang's Testimony on Harsha's Early Interest in Buddhism Re-examined

The rest of the arguments given in support of the theory of Harsha's earlier personal interest in Buddhism are based on the evidence of Yuan Chwang. This evidence is greatly coloured by Yuan Chwang's Buddhistic prejudices and, therefore, requires subjection to minute scrutiny before its acceptance. But at this stage let us evaluate it as it is. Firstly let us discuss his reference to Harsha's respect for the statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. According to him after the murder of Rājyavardhana, the statesmen of Kanauj, led by Po-ni, offered the crown to Harsha who referred the matter to the statue of the Bodhisattva.[2] Here Yuan Chwang is certainly wrong in stating that Harsha was preceded by his brother Rājyavardhana in Kanauj; for Rājyavardhana belonged to and ruled over Thanesar, and not Kanauj. Most likely the statesmen of Kanauj offered the crown to Harsha after Rājyaśrī had been brought back to Kanauj and the enemies of the Maukharis had either returned of their own accord

[1]*Nāgānanda*, Act V, verses 37 and 38. Cf. S. K. De who opines thus: "Although the Buddha is invoked in the benedictory stanza, Gaurī is introduced as a *dues ex machina*, and purely Buddhist traits are not prominent . . ." (*History of Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta, 1947, p. 258).

[2]*Travels*, I, p. 343.

or were repulsed. Now it was quite natural for an ambitious young monarch like Harsha to covet the Maukhari throne. But neither he nor his sister had any right over it. Grahavarman had died without leaving any son[1] and his younger brother 'Su' known from a Nālandā seal[2] and the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*[3] was claiming it for himself.[4] So far no scholar seems to have given any thought to the obvious fact that in ancient India a wife had no place in the list of a king's successors. And if Rājyaśrī had no right over the Kanauj throne, the question of Harsha inheriting it could not arise.[5] Therefore, Harsha moved very cautiously. When his supporters offered (or were they 'persuaded' to offer ?) the crown to him he made a show of reluctance[6] and pretended to refer the matter to the statue of the Bodhisattva.[7] Then at the 'advice' of the Bodhisattva he accepted the responsibility of the Kanauj government without adopting the title Mahārāja and ascending the lion-throne. Later on he made the show of ruling over Kanauj with his sister.[8] But by the time of the arrival of Yuan Chwang in Kanauj all the pretexts and appearances had been given up and he had begun to rule as the full-fledged king of Kanauj. It is against the background of the history of this cautious but gradual usurpation of Kanauj by him that his show of consulting the statue of Avalokiteśvara should be studied.[9] As noted earlier, Grahavarman was a friend of Divākaramitra; most likely he himself was a Buddhist. So was Rājyaśrī. The people of Kanauj were also by and large Buddhists. When Yuan

[1]When Rājyaśrī requested Harsha to give her permission to assume the red garments, she argued : "A husband or a son is a woman's true support; but to those who are deprived of both, it is immodesty even to continue to live . . ." (*HC*, p. 254).

[2]*EI*, XXIV, pp. 284–85.

[3]*ĀMMK*, p. 626.

[4]As Grahavarman was the eldest son of Avantivarman, 'Su' must have ruled as Mahārājādhirāja after his death.

[5]For the first time we pointed out this important fact in the *Itihāsa Samīkshā* (Hindi, Jaipur), I, Pt. 2, pp. 141–42. Also see our work *Harsha Śīlāditya*, Meerut, 1987, p. 114 ff.

[6]Cf. Julius Caesar's show of reluctance when he was offered the imperial crown of Rome, though he badly wanted to accept it.

[7]Cf. Alexander's pretext of consulting the omens when he realized that he will have to accept the demand of his army to return from the Beas.

[8]The Chinese work *She Kia Fang Che* represents Harsha as carrying on the government, alongwith his widowed sister (*CA*, p. 102).

[9]Vide our work *Harsha and Buddhism*, p. 82.

Chwang visited Kanauj he found that there were as many as 100 Buddhist monasteries with more than 10,000 monks there, while he places the number of the non-Buddhists at only 'several thousand.'[1] The number of the Buddhist monasteries, Watters remarks, "seems to point to a great increase of Buddhism in the district from the time of Fa-hsien, as when the pilgrim visited the Kanauj country there were apparently only two Buddhist monasteries at the capital."[2] It is a very significant fact because, as noted above, in the same preiod in Harsha's ancestral kingdom of Thanesar the number of the Buddhist monasteries was only three with only 'above 700 prefessed Buddhists.' Viewed against the background of the predominance of Buddhism in Kanauj and the fact that the people of this city had recently been put to a great trouble by Śaśāṅka, the avowed enemy of Buddhism, the show of respect to the statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara by Harsha (who was an ardent worshipper of Śiva) cannot be regarded as more than a diplomatic move to win over to his side the affections of the Buddhist subjects of the Maukhari kingdom which he could hardly hope to conquer by force at that early stage of his career.

There is another possibility: and that is that the entire story of Harsha's show of respect to Avalokiteśvara is baseless. For, significantly, in the version of the *Life* the name of Avalokiteśvara does not occur. It only says that "then the great minister Bhaṇi and the subordinate officers, afflicted to see the people without a ruler, agreed to place on the throne his younger brother Śīlāditya."[3]

Harsha's Early Fame and Deeds for Buddhism not Very Significant

Once the compulsions of the political situation of Kanauj *vis-a-vis* Harsha's own position are appreciated, the rest of the points culled from the narrative of Yuan Chwang to prove Harsha's faith in Buddhism before he met the Chinese priest, lose much of their force. Now it would appear quite likely that Harsha erected a number of stūpas on the banks of the Gaṅgā at the request of his Buddhist sister and to please the people of Kanauj who were more inclined towards the creed of the Buddha. If Bhāskaravarman, a staunch Śaiva, could promise to build a hundred monasteries to please

[1] *Travels*, *I*, p. 340.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 342.
[3] *Life*, p. 83.

Yuan Chwang,[1] Harsha also could do it to please his sister and the people without giving up his personal faith in Śaivism. The same motivation might have been behind the 'forcible' appropriation of the tooth-relic of the Buddha from Kashmir and its subsequent enshrinement in a saṅghārāma in Kanauj. If we remember that in ancient India a king's personal faith usually did not make him hostile to other religions, then there will be no difficulty in accepting that Harsha did all these things and yet he himself remained faithful to his own faith, Śaivism.

Yuan Chwang's reference to the erection by Harsha of hospices (*puṇyaśālās*) provided with food, drinks and physicians with medicines for travellers and poor persons, hardly needs any comment. To regard them as indicative of his faith in Buddhism would be assuming that kings belonging to other religions did not do such things for the welfare of their people. Actually such deeds were commonly performed by ancient Indian kings; it is another matter that in the case of Harsha we have a Yuan Chwang to report and appreciate them.

We should also remember that everything that Yuan Chwang has reported is not correct. For example his statement that Harsha 'forbade the slaughter of any living thing or flesh as food throughout the Five Indies on pain of death without pardon' is palpably wrong. In the general description of India he explicitly states that in food 'fish, mutton and venison are occasional dainties' though "the flesh of oxen, asses, elephants, horses, pigs, dogs, foxes, wolves, lions, monkeys, apes is forbidden, and those who eat such food become pariahs."[2] According to the *Life* Harsha himself gave in gift among other things 'various drinks and meats' to '10,000 of the religious community' (Buddhist monks) in the quinquennial distribution of alms at Prayāga.[3]

There is another consideration which goes against Yuan Chwang's portrayal of Harsha as a great Buddhist ruler. Yuan Chwang entered India in October 630, but met Harsha for the first time in October 642,[4] and that too at the latter's initiative. The greater part

[1] *Life*, pp. 187–88.

[2] *Travels*, I, p. 88 f., 178.

[3] *Life*, p. 186.

[4] Cunningham, A., *The Ancient Geography of India*, p. 478. Cunningham has worked out a detailed chronology of Yuan Chwang's travels. The dates given here are taken from the chronological table given by him.

of this long period of twelve years was spent by him in the empire of Harsha. He resided in Kanauj itself for three months (from September to the end of November, 636 A.D.) But apparently he was not sufficiently impressed with the reputation of Harsha as a Buddhist ruler, for there arose no desire in him to meet this Indian king whom he later on sought to portray as another Aśoka. Even as late as 641, when he resolved to return to China, the idea of meeting Harsha did not cross his mind. Does it not prove that Harsha was not at all famous as a great Buddhist ruler in his own time? Against this it may be argued that being a monk Yuan Chwang was not interested in meeting kings. But it would not be entirely correct.[1] An incident narrated in the *Life* belies it. According to it, in 642, shortly before Yuan Chwang was invited by Bhāskaravarman to visit Kāmarūpa, a Nirgrantha, who was skilled in divination, when requested by the Pilgrim predicted that Bhāskaravarman and Harsha would help him in carrying the sacred texts and images safely to China. Then Yuan Chwang lamented: "As to these two kings I have never yet seen them; how then such a kindness befall me?"[2] This exclamation not only shows that Yuan Chwang had no monkish aversion to meet kings; it also proves that in 642, when he became anxious to meet Harsha, it was not because Harsha was a great Buddhist ruler, but because he hoped that Harsha would give him escort for taking the sacred books and images to China safely. It is also significant that even for this purpose Harsha was no better than Bhāskaravarman in Yuan Chwang's estimation.[3]

Harsha's Religion After he Met Yuan Chwang

Yuan Chwang's Claim of His Influence over Harsha : Corrective Evidence not Available

From the above discussion it is apparent that there is no conclusive evidence to believe that Harsha had developed a personal interest in Buddhism before he met Yuan Chwang. Though there are enough indications of his liberal, helping and respectful attitude towards this

[1]During his travels in Central Asia and India Yuan Chwang met a number of kings. He enjoyed the hospitality of the king of Kashmir for two years. (*Travels*, I, p. 259). After his return to China, he spent rest of life under the patronage of the Emperor there.

[2]*Life*, p. 167.

[3]Cf. our work *Harsha and Buddhism*.

religion, the positive evidence at our disposal conclusively proves that personally he was a worshipper of the Lord Śiva. Now the question arises: did he change his personal religion after he came into contact with Yuan Chwang? If one accepts the testimony of Yuan Chwang as literal truth, the answer to this question can only be in affirmative. This is what the historians have been doing so far. They cite the evidence of the description of the first two meetings of Harsha with Yuan Chwang and of the Kanauj and Prayāga assemblies to prove that after his meeting with Yuan Chwang, Harsha not only became a 'redoubtable champion' of the Mahāyāna[1] but also deliberately treated with scant respect the other religious sects including Śaivas as being distinctly inferior.[2] But the question is: is the testimony of Yuan Chwang reliable? Is his version of what he saw of Harsha's religious beliefs and activities true? Answers to such questions have never been seriously investigated. It entails a critical assessment of the credibility of Yuan Chwang which nobody seems to have seriously questioned. But as Yuan Chwang is the only source for this phase of Harsha's religious beliefs and the corrective evidence of the *Harshacharita*, inscriptions, coins, etc. is not available, it is a matter of prime importance to subject his testimony to the minutest possible scrutiny which, in the absence of other evidences, can only be done (i) by evaluating it in the light of his character and prejudices and (ii) by identifying and removing its inner contradictions.

Yuan Chwang's Greatness and Deficiencies : His Prejudices and Egotism

Yuan Chwang was undoubtedly the greatest Chinese scholar to visit our country in ancient period. He was born in 602 A.D. in an orthodox Confucian family of China. He became a Buddhist monk at the age of 20. Not being content with the existing translations of the Buddhist texts in Chinese, he decided to visit India. He started in 629 A.D. and, after great hardships, reached Kapiśā in 630 via Central Asia by the northern land route. During the next fourteen years he travelled all over India staying for short periods at the main centres of Buddhist learning including two years in Kashmir and in all about two years at Nālandā. His vast scholarship (including knowledge of Sanskrit), ardour and sincerity of faith,

[1]Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
[2]*CA*, p. 118.

religious zeal, personal courage and self-abnegation were most exceptional. One of his greatest qualities was the singleness of purpose. He gathered information, travelled in most difficult and distant lands, indulged in discussions and debates, translated Indian Sanskrit texts into Chinese and wrote original treatises to propagate the Law of the Buddha—the sole aim of his life. For about half a century nothing could make him lose sight even for a single day of the object of his pursuit. He resisted the temptations offered by the kings of Kāmarūpa and Kanauj just as he resisted the pirates of the Gangā and the monks of Nālandā and, later on, yet more attractive offers of the Emperor of his own country. Till his death in 664 A.D. he spent every single minute of his life towards the fulfilment of the goal which he had set before himself.

But Yuan Chwang also had two great deficiencies—probably quite natural in such an exceptional personality, but nevertheless deficiencies, which create problems for modern students of history. They were, firstly, his extremely superstitious and credulous attitude for things Buddhist and, secondly, his personal egotism. The fact that he consulted a Nirgrantha, who was 'skilled in divination' to know whether he will be able to carry successfully the sacred texts and images to China,[1] shows his superstitious nature. In the *Records* he constantly quotes supernatural phenomena and miracles that do not deserve any serious consideration.[2] In the words of R. C. Majumdar, "Any one who goes through the pilgrim's bulky volumes is struck by his enthusiasm, bordering almost on fanaticism in matters concerning Buddhist religion. He was so much blinded by faith and devotion that he even describes supernatural phenomena as happening before his very eyes. He saw everything in India through the spectacles of Buddhism, and regarded its inherent superiority over all other religions as beyond question. The account of such a person about the religious proclivities of Harsha must be accepted with more than usual reserve."[3]

[1]*Life*, p. 166.

[2]He talks of the statues that moved or flew through space from far distant places and performed other miracles. He claims that the tooth-relic of the Buddha which Harsha had appropriated from the king of Kashmir and which he had himself seen and worshipped, was 'an inch and a half long' and 'at all times emitted a bright light'. Cf. Beal, *Life*, Preface, p. viii; also see Saint-Hilaire, J. Barthelemy, *Hiouen-Thsang in India*, tr. from French by Laura Ensore (Varanasi, 1965), pp. 81-85.

[3]C.I, p. 117.

Another important feature of Yuan Chwang's nature which has coloured his account, is his supreme egotism. Everywhere in his description of India he depicts himself as towering head and shoulder above everybody else. Even great kings, including Harsha, cut a sorry, almost pitiable figure in his presence. Almost all the Indian scholars whom he came into contact with are depicted as very much inferior to him. They appear to have done nothing else except singing eulogy of 'the great Master of Law from China.' None could equal his brilliance in explaining the sacred texts. But sometimes it is also clear that all this was his vanity and nothing more. To quote one example: once Harsha requested Śīlabhadra, the Abbot of Nālandā, to send four eminent scholars to Orissa to combat certain Hīnayānist priests who had composed a work of 700 verses to destroy Mahāyānism. Among the four so selected by Śīlabhadra one was Yuan Chwang himself. At that time Yuan Chwang boasted that he alone would be 'quite sufficient' to overthrow the Hīnayānists.[1] Though the proposed debate could not be held because of Harsha's other engagements, yet the hollowness of Yuan Chwang's claim is proved by his own testimony. For elsewhere we are informed that he could understand the said Hīnayānist essay of 700 verses only when it was explained to him by one of his Brāhmaṇa slaves to whom he candidly confessed : "These are heretical doctrines of which I know nothing."[2] Incidentally he is said to have taken this help after the middle of night lest any one of the public suppose that he had aught to learn from his slave and so lose confidence in his celebrity![3]

An appreciation of credulity, religious prejudices and egotism in the nature of Yuan Chwang and of the inner contradictions in his testimony (pointed out below) helps us in making a more correct appraisal of his description of his first two meetings with Harsha and of the Kanauj and Prayāga assemblies on which the belief in the theory of Harsha's personal faith in Mahāyāna Buddhism rests.

Yuan Chwang's Egoistical Account of the Circumstances Leading to His Meeting with Harsha

In this connection first of all it must be noted that as Yuan Chwang met Harsha for the first time in October 642 and had taken leave

[1] *Life*, p. 161.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 164.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

of the latter in May 643,[1] they both could not have remained together for more than seven months. In such a short period the influence of the Pilgrim over the Emperor could not have become so overpowering as is claimed by the former. But Yuan Chwang does not claim that his influence over Harsha increased gradually. In his usual egoistical fashion he claims that Harsha's devotion to him was instant, spontaneous and complete. The description of the circumstances leading to their meeting as given in the *Life* by Hwui Li, on the basis of the information supplied by Yuan Chwang himself, is the supreme example of the vanity of the Chinese pilgrim. According to it when Yuan Chwang was staying at Nālandā during his second visit (early months of 642) to resolve his doubts Bhāskaravarman, the king of Kāmarūpa, sent a messenger to Śīlabhadra, the Abbot of the monastery, with a request to send 'the great priest from China' to him. Śīlabhadra did not comply with it and refused even the second request. Then Bhāskaravarman wrote a third letter threatening Śīlabhadra that if Yuan Chwang, for whom he had 'an invincible longing' to 'show respect', was not sent to him, he would equip his army and elephants and 'trample to the very dust that monastery of Nālandā.' The threat had the desired effect. Yuan Chwang visited Kāmarūpa and stayed there 'for a month and more' (August-September 642). When Harsha, who had gone to conquer Orissa, returned from there and found that the Master of Law had gone to Kāmarūpa he bade Bhāskaravarman to send the priest of China to him at once. Bhāskaravarman replied that 'he can take my head, but he cannot take the Master of Law yet.' At this, Harsha was 'greatly enraged' and replied by the laconic message : 'send the head, that I may have it immediately by my messenger who is to bring it here.' Bhāskaravarman was greatly alarmed at the folly of his own language and immediately came with his army and Yuan Chwang in a pavilion-of-travel and himself went to meet Harsha. At his submissive attitude Harsha was greatly pleased and the two were reconciled.

How far these events are correct is anybody's guess; but one thing is obvious—Yuan Chwang has narrated them in a fashion which leaves in the mind of the reader the impression that the two great kings of India were vying with each other in soliciting his teachings and one of them even endangered his own life for the

[1] Cunningham, *op. cit.*

sake of his company. The contradiction in the story—Bhāskaravarman threatening the Abbot of Nālandā with dire consequences showing utter contempt for the fact that it was situated within the Kanauj empire and then becoming mortally afraid of Harsha—can hardly escape the notice of a wary historian. We have narrated these events in detail because on the one hand they provide a striking example of Yuan Chwang's egotism and on the other serve as a background against which the account of Harsha's first two meetings with the pilgrim should be studied.

Obviously Coloured and Exaggerated Account of Harsha's First Two Meetings with Yuan Chwang

According to the *Life*, Harsha went to meet Yuan Chwang at the pavilion-of-travel on the night of the same day. "On his arrival the king bowed down at the feet of the Master of Law, then scattering flowers before him he regarded him with respect, and uttered his praises in verses innumerable."[1] After it Harsha asked him some questions about China[2] and then took his leave. This account cannot be wholly true, for it is difficult to believe that Harsha could have shown such respect and sung 'innumerable verses' in praise of a comparatively young Chinese priest[3] whom he was meeting for the first time.

The description of the next meeting of Yuan Chwang with Harsha, which took place the next day morning, is still more fantastic. According to it, when the entertainment was over, Yuan Chwang showed Harsha his treatise which was written with a view to restraining the 'wicked doctrine' (viz. Hīnayāna). After examining it at the very spot, Harsha came to the conclusion that it had

[1]*Life*, p. 175.

[2]It is strange that in this interview Harsha shows almost complete ignorance about China, though according to Ma-twa-lin he had exchanged embassies with that country as early as 641 (*CA*, p. 120). The statement of R. C. Majumdar that Harsha sent an embassy to China when he was impressed by Yuan Chwang's description of the power and prestige of the Chinese Emperor (*ibid.*) is wrong, for as he himself elsewhere (*CA*, p. 109) states, Harsha met Yuan Chwang for the first time in 643, two years after the date of the visit of the Chinese embassy.

[3]Note that Harsha was born in 590 A.D. while Yuan Chwang was born 12 years latter. Whether or not Harsha was the author of the three plays attributed to him, it can hardly be maintained that he was capable of composing 'innumerable verses' in praise of an unknown Chinese pilgrim instantaneously.

destroyed all the other doctrines and established the truth of the Mahāyāna! His sister (who till then believed in the Sammatīya school of the Hīnayāna) was filled with joy when she heard Yuan Chwang exposing the extreme poverty of her own faith! Harsha became so convinced of the truth contained in the book of Yuan Chwang that he on 'the same day' "sent an order throughout the different kingdoms that all the disciples of the various schools should assemble in the town of Kānyakubja to investigate the treatise of the Master of Law, of China."[1]

It was indeed a marvel. Harsha took a cursory look at the book of Yuan Chwang (in the circumstances it could not have been a deeper study) and became absolutely convinced of the superiority of the Mahāyāna over every other creed! His conviction became so complete that 'the same day' he sent orders for convening a grand all-India assembly at Kanauj to prove its merit!! What is more, his sister became overjoyed when she heard Yuan Chwang demolishing the Hīnayānist creed in which she had been believing for more than thirty-five years!!! Needless to say that such miraculous conversions do not take place in real life. Apparently the account of this meeting is highly exaggerated. It is quite likely that Harsha in this meeting or in some other meeting agreed to convene an assembly of the Buddhists to test the claim of Yuan Chwang, but the assertion that he and his sister themselves were instantly converted has obviously been made to glorify the personality of Yuan Chwang. The very crudeness of the exaggeration belies it.

In this connection it may also be noted that there is an inherent contradiction in the description of Yuan Chwang. For, on the one hand, he strives to show that it was he who was responsible for bringing Harsha and Rājyaśrī within the fold of the Mahāyāna. It is this impression which has led R. S. Tripathi to observe, "Probably the philosophy of the Sammatīya school of Buddhism, of which Rājyaśrī was an exponent, originally held the chief place in Harsha's affections but after meeting with Yuan Chwang and listening to his brilliant exposition of the doctrines of the Mahāyāna he transferred his allegiance to this advanced school."[2] But, on the other hand, by referring at other places to Harsha's resolve to consult the statue of Avalokiteśvara and his invitation to the Mahāyāna

[1] *Life*, p. 175 f.
[2] *HK*, p. 164.

doctors of Nālandā to face the challenge of the Hīnayānist priests of Orissa, Yuan Chwang gives the impression that Harsha was interested in the Mahāyāna even before he met him. Both these positions cannot be correct. But they can be reconciled very easily on the assumption that personally Harsha had nothing to do with either Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna; he was only interested in organising religious debates in which eminent scholars of every faith were invited to participate. To us it appears that as Yuan Chwang was a foreigner, Harsha showed him some extra respect which the latter could not stomach and drew the wrong conclusion that this 'brilliant exposition' had converted Harsha himself—just as the Christian missionaries had wrongly concluded that Akbar was on the verge of embracing Christianity. So our contention is this: once the account of this meeting is shorn of those elements which are palpably exaggerated and were apparently introduced to glorify the personality of Yuan Chwang (the *Records* and the *Life* both are full of such elements) then there remains nothing in it which can be taken as a proof of the theory that Harsha had accepted Mahāyāna as his personal faith.

Kanauj Assembly : Some Concocted Elements in the Description of the 'Records'

From Kajangal Yuan Chwang and Harsha went to Kanauj where the proposed assembly was held. The journey to Kanauj took about two months (from November 1 to the end of December 642). Harsha's role in this assembly is regarded as one of the most important arguments in favour of the theory of his faith in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Omitting unnecessary details and highlighting those points which are cited to prove Harsha's faith in the Mahāyāna, the account of the assembly as given in the *Life*[1] may be summarised as follows: In all, kings of eighteen countries of the Five Indies, 3,000 priests thoroughly acquainted with both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, 3,000 Brāhmaṇas and Nirgranthas and about a thousand priests from the Nālandā monastery participated in the assembly. The proceedings of the assembly opened with a huge procession in which a golden statute of the Buddha was carried out on a gorgeously caparisoned elephant. On its right went king Harsha dressed as Śakra (Indra) holding a white chowrie and on the left was Bhāskara-

[1] *Life*, pp. 177–81.

varman, dressed as Brahma-rāja (Brahmā) with a precious parasol in his hand. When the procession reached the venue of the assembly, the statue was carried into a hall and placed on a precious throne. The worship of the statue was followed by a grand feast and the feast by religious discussions. In the hall of discussion were seated 1,000 Buddhists, 500 celebrated Brāhmaṇas and followers of heretical doctrine (Hīnayāna) and about 200 of the great ministers of the different kingdoms. Others were seated outside the gate of the hall. Yuan Chwang, who was nominated as the 'Lord of the discussion', began by extolling the teachings of the Mahāyāna and announced a subject for discussion He also caused a placard to be written and hung outside the door of the place of assembly stating: "if there is any one who can find a single word in the proposition contrary to reason or is able to entangle (the argument) then at the request of the opponent, I offer my head as a recompense." But none dared to challenge him for five days. Then the followers of Hīnayāna, 'seeing he had overturned their school', plotted to kill him. Thereupon Harsha issued a proclamation threatening that if 'any one should hurt or touch the Master of Law, he shall be forthwith beheaded; and whoever speaks against him, his tongue shall be cut out.' After this 'the followers of error withdrew' and no one joined the discussion. Therefore, when 18 days had passed and the assembly dispersed, Yuan Chwang was declared victorious and carried out in a procession to proclaim his victory. 'The whole multitude was filled with joy on account of the Master's success...the congregation of the Great Vehicle called him Mahāyāna Deva...whilst the followers of the Little Vehicle called him Moksha Deva.'

This in brief is the account of the Kanauj assembly as given in the *Life*. Its description in the *Records*[1] differs from this on some minor and major points. The most important difference between the two is this: the *Records* does not say anything about the plot to kill Yuan Chwang; instead it refers to the plot of the Brāhmaṇas to kill Harsha himself. According to it 'on the day of the separation' of the assembly the great tower built in the hall and pavilion over the gate of the saṅghārāma suddenly caught fire. But it was miraculously extinguished when Harsha prayed: "let the force of my religious conduct destroy this fire; or if not, let me die." Soon after it, when Harsha was surveying the scene of destruction from the top of the stūpa, a strange man, knife in hand, rushed on the king. The

[1] *Records*, I, pp. 218-21.

man was seized and confessed that he was hired by the heretics who had deliberately set the tower on fire to get an opportunity to assassinate the king. Five hundred Brāhmaṇas, all of singular talent, confessed to their share in the plot, adding that they were "jealous of Śramaṇas whom the king had reverenced and exceedingly honoured." The king punished the chief of them and banished the 500 Brāhmaṇas to the frontiers of India.

From the above account it is clear that while the *Life* refers to the plot of the Hīnayānists to kill Yuan Chwang because he had overthrown their doctrine, the *Records* refers to the plot of the Brāhmaṇas to kill Harsha because they were jealous of the favours showered by Harsha on the Śramaṇas. Which of the two accounts is correct? So far it has been the practice of the historians to mix up the two accounts assuming that both of them are correct.[1] We however beg to differ. It is highly unlikely, if not altogether impossible, that two different plots were hatched by two different communities to kill two different persons in the same assembly. Interestingly the account of the *She Kia Fang Che*, which has remained unnoticed so far does not refer to any plot; it only refers to the worship of the Buddha by Harsha and Kumārarāja as a normal feature unconnected with any particular religious assembly.[2] We personally feel that the amount of the *Life* represents the true course of events. Firstly, it should be remembered that the thrust of Yuan Chwang's endeavour was against the Hīnayāna doctrine. It was so earlier when he was selected by Śīlabhadra to go to Orissa to controvert the Hīnayānist priests there; and it was his declared objective to demolish the Hīnayāna faith in the Kanauj assembly. Actually the assembly was called by Harsha to examine the treatise composed by Yuan Chwang for refuting the Hīnayāna doctrine. Therefore, the Hīnayānist plot to kill him should be regarded as a more rational outcome of the emotional atmosphere prevailing in the assembly. Secondly, the reference in the *Records* to the miraculous extinction of fire proves that at least some supernatural elements were introduced in it by Yuan Chwang by his own imagination; in contrast, the account of the *Life* is more human and entirely devoid of supernatural events. Thirdly, as we will see below, shortly afterwards in the quinquennial ceremony at Prayāga Harsha gave alms to the

[1]Cf. *CA*, pp. 118–19.
[2]*She Kia Fang Che*, trans. by P. C. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 56–60.

Buddhists on only one day while the bestowal gifts to the Brāhmaṇas lasted for twenty days. One would hardly expect it to have happened if the Brāhmaṇas had planned to kill him only a short while ago. To us it appears that the Kanauj assembly was marred by the unseemly hostility between the two sections of the Buddhists and one of them, the Hīnayānists, plotted to kill Yuan Chwang. But later on, probably realizing that the episode would adversely reflect on Buddhism in general, Yuan Chwang in his *Records* concocted the story of the plot of the Brāhmaṇas to kill Harsha. But his biographer Hwui Li, who wrote with the help of the original notes of Yuan Chwang, inadvertently narrated the actual episode. The fact that the Kanauj Assembly was marked not by Brāhmaṇa-Buddhist hostility but by the antagonism between the Mahāyānists and the Hīnayānists is further proved to be right by the letters exchanged betwen Yuan Chwang and the Indian monks Jñānaprabha and Prajñādeva between 652–54 A.D.[1] This Prajñādeva is possibly the same Brāhmaṇa Hīnayānist teacher who in the *Life* is said to have composed a treatise of 700 ślokas against the Great Vehicle.[2] At the suggestion of the Hīnayānists, Harsha had requested Śīlabhadra of Nālandā to send four Mahāyānist teachers to examine and contest this work. Yuan Chwang himself was one of the four so selected by Śīlabhadra. But because of the preoccupation of Harsha the contest could not take place. Now in one of these letters Yuan Chwang reminds Prajñādeva that during his sojourn in India he had the honour of meeting Prajñādeva in the convocation of Kānyakubja where "we engaged in a debate and argued out our respective view-points in the presence of princes and thousands of devotees. As one of us expounded the tenets of the Mahāyāna school, the other advocated the aims of Hīnayāna. In the course of debate our arguments unavoidably got heated. In order to defend the truth, there was scant regard for personal feelings. Thus, there were clashes." Yuan Chwang also makes it clear that in the debate Prajñādeva was not defeated because in this very letter written in 654 A.D. he is still pleading that Prajñādeva gives up his "presistence in unbelief" to embrace Mahāyānism. It clearly shows that (1) the Kanauj assembly was marked by Mahāyāna-Hīnayāna rivalry, and that (2) Yuan Chwang was not an unchallenged victor of the

[1] Devahuti, *Harsha: A Political Study*, 2nd ed., 1983, pp. 281–96.
[2] *Life*, p. 159.

contest. Thus, one of the major arguments in favour of the theory of Harsha's faith in Buddhism, viz. his partiality for Buddhism leading to the animosity of the Brāhmaṇas, is proved to be baseless.[1]

Kanauj Assembly Does Not Prove Harsha's Faith in Buddhism

Now the question arises: What else is there in the account of the Kanauj assembly which is in favour of the belief that Harsha had accepted Mahāyāna Buddhism as his personal creed? There is only one thing which may be so interpreted and that is the worship of the image of the Buddha by him, along with the fact that he and Bhāskaravarman, dressed respectively as Śakra and Brahmā, appeared as Buddha's attendants. But the argument is highly fallacious. It overlooks the fact that the Kanauj assembly was an assembly of the Buddhists and was called in order to give an opportunity to Buddhist scholars to examine the treatise of Yuan Chwang. In such an assembly the worship of the Buddha was but natural. We should remember that in ancient India usually, if not always, the Hindus did not hesitate to worship the gods of other religions. Harsha, a highly liberal Śaiva can hardly be expected to have any such objection. If Bhāskaravarman could participate in the worship of the Buddha and yet be regarded as a Śaiva, one wonders why should it be argued that as Harsha had participated in the ceremony of Buddha's worship he must have had given up his personal faith in Śaivism. The argument that he showed disrespect to the Brāhmaṇical religion by attiring himself and Bhāskaravarman as Śakra and Brahmā respectively, is also baseless. These gods had a place in Buddhism also and there they were regarded as subordinate to the Buddha. For example, in his description of the kingdom of Kie-pi-tha (Kapitha), situated 200 *li* south-east of Kanauj, Yuan Chwang records that in one of its vihāras was placed a figure of the Buddha in stone and "on the right and left of this statue" were "the figures of Brahmā and Śakra."[2] Therefore the spectacle of Śakra and Brahmā serving the Buddha could not wound the feeling of the Brāhmaṇas. In Hinduism itself if a god was regarded as supreme in

[1]The suggestion of the Polish Indologist M. C. Byrski (*Bhāratī*, Varanasi, 1961-62, No. 5, p. 80) that in some way Bāṇa was involved in the plot of the Brāhmaṇas is absolutely without any foundation. Such imaginative suggestions are easily made than proved.

[2]*Life*, p. 81 f.

one sect usually he was awarded a secondary position in other sects; but nobody minded it. It was a matter of everybody's common experience.

Thus there is nothing in the description of the Kanauj assembly which may prove that Harsha's personal faith was Buddhism. There was also nothing extraordinary in the respect shown by him to Yuan Chwang. Bhāskaravarman is also said to have welcomed Yuan Chwang with much fanfare, 'paying him reverence with much ceremony. . .with religious offering of flowers and incense.'[1] There was also nothing unusual in Harsha's promulgation for the safety of the Chinese pilgrim; as the assembly was being held under his auspices it was his duty. Actually it is the manner in which Yuan Chwang has described the whole episode which has created confusion in the minds of historians. He has described his challenge to his opponents offering his head to any one who could find fault with his arguments as if it was something extraordinary. Actually this formula was a part of such disputations. For example, the Brāhmaṇa of the Lokātiya sect, who later on explained the Hīnayānist treatise to Yuan Chwang, had challenged the Nālandā monks thus: "If any one within (the Nālandā monastery) can refute these principles, I will then give my head as a proof of his victory."[2] Similarly, the fact that Yuan Chwang was carried out in a procession after his 'victory' was also a commonplace thing. According to the *Life* itself, "This was the custom of the Western kingdoms whenever any one has obtained the victory in discussion."[3] The egoistical manner in which these events are narrated in the *Life* merely proves the vanity of Yuan Chwang; it does not prove that Harsha had accepted Mahāyānism as his personal religion.[4]

Prayāga Quinquennial Ceremony is a Proof of Harsha's Faith in Śaivism

From Kanauj Yuan Chwang went to Prayāga to participate in Harsha's quinquennial alms-giving ceremony (March 1, 643). The description of the ceremony is also cited in favour of the theory of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 171.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 161.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[4] Interestingly the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (L. 14–19) may suggest that Mahodaya, that is Kanauj, was traditionally famous for the worship of Sūrya, one of the gods worshipped by the Pushyabhūtis.

Harsha's faith in Mahāyānism. For example, Devahuti suggests that the ceremony was held in the Buddhist tradition.[1] But there was nothing particularly Buddhistic about it. It is true that such ceremonies were organised by the Buddhist rulers also, but it was primarily a Hindu institution held at a sacred Hindu site. For example, Kālidāsa refers to the *Sarvasvadāna* ceremony of Raghu in his *Raghuvaṁśa*[2] (IV. 86). According to Yuan Chwang, "From old time till now, the kings and noble families, whenever they had occasion to distribute their gifts in charity, ever came to this place, and here gave away their goods; hence it is called *the great charity enclosure.*"[3] Further he says that Harsha performed such ceremonies after the example of his ancestors[4] who were certainly not Buddhists. He also states that the quinquennial ceremony in which he participated was the sixth such ceremony performed by Harsha. It means that Harsha was holding such ceremonies since 617. But he was definitely a *Paramamāheśvara* till 631. It follows, therefore, that these ceremonies had no particular Buddhist affiliation. Bāṇa, who knew Harsha as a believer in Śaivism, also refers to a strip of cloth (*chīra*), which was put on to signify the solemn conferring as a special gift of all the property (*sarvasva dāna*).[5] It at once reminds one of Yuan Chwang's statement that after all was given as gifts, Harsha begged from his sister Rājyaśrī an ordinary second-hand garment to put on.[6]

Here it may be pointed out that Yuan Chwang has given a 'doctored' version of this ceremony in the *Records*. For example in the *Records* he refers only to the worship of the Buddha[7] while in the *Life* it is explicitly stated that the image of the Buddha was worshipped on the first day, of Ādityadeva (Sūrya) on the second day and of Īśvaradeva (Śiva) on the third day.[8] Why did he conceal in the *Records* this fact which was certainly mentioned in his notes on the basis of which Hwui Li composed his biography? Obviously because it was an uncomfortable fact, not in consonance with his depiction of Harsha as a believer in Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, the reference to the worship of the Buddha, Sūrya and Śiva by

[1]Devahuti, *op. cit.*, 1st ed., p. 157.
[2]*Kālidāsa Granthāvalī*, ed. by Sitarama Chaturvedi, p. 50.
[3]*Records*, I, p. 233.
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]*HC*, p. 60.
[6]*Life*, p. 187.
[7]*Records*, I, p. 233.
[8]*Life*, p. 186

Harsha at Prayāga must be correct for Āditya was worshipped by the ancestors of Harsha, the Buddha by his brother and sister and Śiva by Harsha himself. Hwui Li could not have invented the names of these three particular gods, which were worshipped by the various members of the Pushyabhūti royal family, out of his own mind. Therefore, the worship of Śiva in particular by Harsha as late as 643, till before the departure of Yuan Chwang, becomes a fact. It demolishes the theory that Harsha had become a Mahāyānist as a result of the influence of Yuan Chwang.[1]

It is also very significant that after having worshipped respectively the Buddha, Āditya and Śiva on the first three days Harsha gave gifts to '10,000 of the religious community' (obviously Buddhist monks) for a day only, while the bestowal of gifts to the Brāhmaṇas lasted for 20 days. Even bestowal of gifts to the heretics (Jainas etc.?) and to those who came from distant lands lasted for ten days each and to the poor, destitute and the orphans for thirty days. The last, that is the seventy-fifth day, was occupied by the bestowal of Harsha's personal belongings.[2] Thus out of these 75 days only one was allotted for the distribution of gifts to the Buddhists and as many as twenty for distributing gifts to the Brāhmaṇas. This fact was also not mentioned by Yuan Chwang in the *Records*, obviously because it was against his portrayal of Harsha as a great supporter of Buddhism and Buddhists.

Conclusion: Harsha Never Adopted Buddhism as His Personal Religion

From the above discussion the following conclusions emerge:

(1) Harsha's own inscriptions and coins as well as the testimony of Bāṇa prove beyond any doubt that he was personally a Śaiva at least till 631 A.D.

[1]Here it is significant to note that in his description of the city of Kanauj Yuan Chwang specially mentions the temple of the Sun-deva, which was situated to the south of the stone *vihāra*, and of Maheśvara, that in Śiva, which was situated not far from the sun temple. These two temples were built of blue stone of great lustre and were ornamented with various elegant sculptures. In length and breadth they corresponded with the vihāra of the Buddha. Each of these foundations had 1000 attendants to sweep and water it; the sound of drums and of songs accompanied by music, ceased not day nor night (*Records*, Pt. I, p. 223). If anything, this description proves that Harsha paid equal respect to Buddha (the deity adored by his brother, sister and a substantial section of the people of Kanauj) Sūrya (the god worshipped by his ancestors) and Śiva (the deity of his personal faith).

[2]*Life*, p. 186 ff.

(2) The worship of Śiva along with the Buddha and Āditya in the quinquennial ceremony of Prayāga held in 643 proves that Harsha was still a Śaiva when Yuan Chwang was about to take his leave. For, the worship of these gods in particular in that ceremony becomes explicable only on the assumption that Āditya was worshipped because he was the deity of the ancestors of Harsha, the Buddha because he was held in veneration by Rājyavardhana and Rājyaśrī and Śiva because he was the personal god of Harsha.

(3) The arguments advanced to prove Harsha's inclination towords Buddhism before he met Yuan Chwang are mostly personal 'opinions' of modern scholars. Many of them become easily explicable if it is assumed that Harsha was, like most other Hindu rulers, quite liberal and large-hearted in religious affairs and did quite a lot for the Buddhists to please his sister Rājyaśrī and the people of Kanauj (who were ardent Buddhists) without giving up his personal devotion to the Lord Śiva.

(4) It is no doubt true that Yuan Chwang has described Harsha as a devout Buddhist. But it is also a fact that if his testimony is shorn off his religious prejudices and personal egotism and its inner contradictions are rationally removed then there remains nothing in it which cannot be explained on the assumption that Harsha, though personally a Śaiva, was always respectful and helpful to other religions, including Buddhism, and extended traditional Indian courtesy to the foreign visitor which his guest misunderstood as Harsha's conversion to his own faith.

(5) The account of the first two meetings of Harsha with Yuan Chwang is palpably exaggerated. The conversion of both Harsha and Rājyaśrī could not have been so sudden and yet so complete.

(6) The account of the Kanauj assembly does not prove that Harsha had personally become a Buddhist. The worship of the Buddha in a Buddhist assembly was but natural. The scene depicting Indra and Brahmā as attendants of the Buddha could not have injured the feelings of the Hindus because these two were recognised gods of Buddhism as well. Further, the Hindus were accustomed to see a god, recognised as the supreme in one sect, relegated to a secondary position in another sect. The worship of the Buddha by Harsha can also not be regarded as a conclusive proof of his personal faith in Buddhism. If Bhāskaravarman could worship the Buddha and yet remain a Śaiva why the same thing cannot be said of Harsha? The story of the plot of the Brāhmaṇas to kill Harsha be-

cause of his partiality for Buddhism was unknown to Hwui Li and is, therefore, most likely a figment of Yuan Chwang's imagination.

(7) The Prayāga ceremony had nothing to do with Buddhism; rather it was a Hindu ceremony performed at a holy Hindu site. It also conclusively proves that Harsha as yet was a worshipper of Śiva and far more considerate towards the Brāhmaṇas than to the Buddhists.

(8) The suggestion of Byrski that the last days of the reign of Harsha were marked by a lack of balance in his religious policy because he treated his personal religious inclinations as the only appropriate bases for his state policy is not only incorrect but just the reverse of the actual position Though personally a Śaiva, Harsha never let his personal religious beliefs come in the way of the larger interests of the state. Throughout his life he continued to show marked respect for the Buddha and his religion. The suggestion that he was murdered is absolutely groundless.

In view of these considerations we submit that the current view that Harsha had accepted Mahāyāna Buddhism as his personal religion needs serious re-thinking.

Appendix 7

ŚAŚĀṄKA AND BUDDHISM[1]

Śaśāṅka (first quarter of the seventh century A.D.), the king of Gauḍa, who is known from several contemporary sources, occupies a prominent place in Indian history. He is famous as a rival of Harsha of Kanauj and persecutor of Buddhism. He himself was a devotee of Śiva. His coins show Śiva reclining on his bull (Nandī), on the obverse and Lakshmī seated with an elephant on the reverse.[2] A seal matrix cut in the rock of the hill-front of Rohtasgarh also bears the image of a bull on the top.[3]

But Śaśāṅka also followed an anti-Buddhist policy. Yuan Chwang records that "In recent times Śaśāṅka, the enemy and oppressor of Buddhism, cut down the Bodhi Tree (at Gayā), destroyed its roots down to the water, and burned what remained."[4] He also reports that Śaśāṅka made an abortive attempt "to have the image (of Lord Buddha at Bodh-Gayā) removed and replaced by one of Śiva."[5] Again, while giving an account of Kuśinagara he states: "By Śaśāṅka's extermination of Buddhism the groups of Brethren were all broken up to the great distress of the brahmin."[6] At another place, Yuan Chwang says, "In recent times king Śaśāṅka having tried in vain to efface the footprints (of Lord Buddha at the old relic tope at Pāṭaliputra) caused the stone to be thrown into the Ganges, but it returned to its original place."[7] According to Yuan Chwang, because of Sāśāṅka's sinful deeds "his body produced sores and his flesh rotted off, and after a short while he died."[8] Elsewhere Yuan

[1]This Appendix has been written by Shri Shankar Goyal, M.A., Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut.

[2]Allan, J., *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśāṅka, King of Gauḍa*, p. 147.

[3]Cf. Goyal, S. R., *Maukhari-Pushyabhūti-Chālukya Yugīna Abhilekha*, Meerut, 1987, p. 78.

[4]Watters, *Travels*, II, p. 115; Beal, *Records*, II, p. 118, 121.

[5]*Travels*, II, p. 116.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 43. The Brāhmaṇa was the builder of the Buddhist vihāra there.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 92.

[8]Beal, *Records*, II, p. 122.

Chwang narrates that one of the reasons advanced by Bodhisattva to induce Harsha to ascend the throne was that he might "then raise Buddhism from the ruin into which it had been brought by the king of Karṇasuvarṇa."[1] This is, indeed, a confession that Buddhism suffered a great decline on account of the activities of Śaśāṅka. The author of the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* supports the tradition of Śaśāṅka's hostility to Buddhism. He reports that "He (=Soma= Śaśāṅka), of wicked intellect, will destroy the beautiful image of the Buddha. He, of wicked intellect, enamoured of the words of the Tīrthikas, will burn that great bridge of religion (Dharma), (as) prophesied by the former Jinas (Buddhas). Then that angry and greedy evil-doer of false notions and bad opinion will fell down all the monasteries, gardens, and chaityas; and rest-houses of the Nirgranthas."[2] It further says : "He (=Soma =Śaśāṅka) died of a disease in his mouth, having been eaten by worms and went down (to hell). His capital was then destroyed by divine agency. His life was destroyed by magic (*mantra*) done by men; high fever brought about senselessness, and he died."[3] According to R. C. Majumdar, an echo of the tradition of the serious illness of Śaśāṅka is found even in late genealogical works of Bengal Brāhmaṇas.[4] According to the traditions preserved among a section of the Graha-Vipra (also called Śaka-dvīpa) Brāhmaṇas, they are descended from twelve Brāhmaṇas, living on the banks of the Sarayū river, who were summoned to treat an incurable disease from which Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa, was suffering. This tradition, however, says that Śaśāṅka was cured and he rewarded the Brāhmaṇas who then settled in Bengal.

The evidence for the anti-Buddhist policy of Śaśāṅka has been evaluated by modern scholars variously. According to Allan, "it is certain that Śaśāṅka was a persecutor of Buddhism, although the Chinese pilgrim may credit him with more than he deserves."[5] According to G. S. Chatterji Śaśāṅka was one of those rare rulers of ancient India who followed the policy of religious persecution.[6] R.G. Basak has also opined, "it will not be justifiable to exculpate

[1] *Travels*, I, p. 343.
[2] Jayaswal, *An Imperial History of India*, p. 49-50.
[3] Jayaswal, *ibid.*, p. 50.
[4] Majumdar, R. C., in *The History of Bengal*, I, p. 67.
[5] Allan, *Catalogue*, Intro., p. lxiii.
[6] Chatterji, G. S., *Harshavardhana*, p. 159.

Śaśāṅka from his cruel actions."[1]

However, according to many historians including R. P. Chanda, R. D. Banerjee, R. C. Majumdar and B. P. Sinha the above mentioned deeds of Śaśāṅka do not prove that he followed a policy of religious intoleration.[2] They argue that (1) stories of persecution of Buddhism by Śaśāṅka cannot be accepted as true without independent testimony, for they rest upon "the sole evidence of Buddhist writers who cannot, by any means, be regarded as unbiased or unprejudiced, at least in any matter which either concerned Śaśāṅka or adversely affected Buddhism."[3] (2) The stories of the persecution of the Buddhists by Śaśāṅka are full of supernatural and miraculous elements.[4] (3) Yuan Chwang observes that in Karṇasuvarṇa there were ten Buddhist monasteries and above 2,000 Brethren, who were all adherents of the Sammatīya school. There also existed in the city the magnificent Rattamattikā monostery.[5] This flourishing condition of Buddhism in the capital city of Śaśāṅka, as described by Yuan Chwang, is hardly compatible with the view that he was a religious bigot and a cruel persecutor of Buddhism.[6] (4) At the root of Śaśāṅka's ill-feeling towards the Buddhists was probably the fact that the Buddhists of these places in Magadha and elsewhere entered into some conspiracy with Harshavardhana against him, and he therefore wanted to punish them by such oppressive persecution.[7] Sinha points out that there were numerous Buddhist monasteries and seats of learning, and it is quite reasonable to assume that the Buddhists, probably the most fully organised sect in India, exercised some power in the history of political life of Magadha. "It was probably the expulsion of the pro-Buddhist Maukharis from Magadha by the Brāhmaṇical Gauḍas which made Śaśāṅka unpopular with the powerful Buddhists of Magadha... The uprooting of the Bodhi Tree may have been an economic move against the Buddhist hierarchy of Magadha, as presents from all over the Buddhist world were offered at the Bodhi Tree. It is quite

[1]Basak, R. G., *The History of North-Eastern India*, pp. 154–56.

[2]Chanda, R. P., *Gauḍarājamālā*, p. 13 ; Majumdar, R.C., in *The History of Bengal*, I, p. 67; Banerjee, R.D., quoted by Majumdar, *ibid.*, p. 6, n. Sinha, B.P., *The Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha*, p. 259.

[3]Majumdar, in *HB*, I, p. 67.

[4]Majumdar, R. C., *A Comprehensive History of India*, III, Pt. I, p. 207.

[5]*Travels*, II, pp. 191–92.

[6]Majumdar, R. C., *The Classical Age*, pp. 80–81.

[7]Basak, R. G., *op. cit.*

understandable that a foreign religious scholar like Yuan Chwang would notice in these acts of Śaśāṅka a deliberate policy to overthrow and destroy the Buddhist religion. Later on Buddhist writers consciously or unconsciously interpreted the actions of Śaśāṅka as guided purely by religious fanaticism. Such misunderstanding and exaggeration of only one of the various motives of conquerors is not unknown in Indian history."[1] (5) "The story of Śaśāṅka's death immediately after the desecration of the Buddha-image is most suspect, because it is just such an episode as Hsuan-tsang would introduce in order to create effect. A very similar story is told about the anti-Buddhist king, Pushya-mitra Śuṅga, in the northern Buddhist sources. The account of Pushya-mitra's sudden destruction with all his army, after his promulgation at Śākala of a law promising 100 dīnāras for the head of every Buddhist monk slain by his subjects, is manifestly false, and it is reasonable to assume that Hsuan-tsang's story of Śaśāṅka is likewise untrue. The legend of Pushya-mitra was almost certainly known to Hsuan-tsang, for it exists in more than one Chinese version, and we suspect that he had Pushya-mitra's fate in mind when he wrote of a similar curse on Śaśāṅka."[2]

But the arguments advanced by Chanda, Banerjee and others to exonarate Śaśāṅka are not acceptable to us. The argument that the proof for the adoption of such a policy comes only from the Buddhist sources, is rather strange. One wonders from which other source, except the Buddhist literature, the proof for the adoption of a policy of persecution of the Buddhists and their religion may be expected. After all it is the persecuted party which may be expected to preserve the memory of the fact of persecution. It is true that the stories of anti-Buddhist activities of Śaśāṅka are found in only two Buddhist works but it is also a fact that both these works were composed in two different periods, one by Yuan Chwang, who visited India within a few years after the death of Śaśāṅka, and the other by an Indian Buddhist, a few centuries after the visit of the Chinese pilgrim. The author of the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* did not and could not know what Yuan Chwang had written about Śaśāṅka. If, therefore, he has narrated the stories of anti-Buddhist policy of Śaśāṅka he must have drawn on the indigenous tradition current in India in his own times. Thus, the anti-Buddhist policy of Śaśāṅka

[1]Sinha, B. P., *op. cit.*, pp. 259–60.
[2]Devahuti, *Harsha : a Political Study*, 1983, p. 48.

must have been cruel enough to be remembered in this country centuries after his death. The suggestion of Devahuti that the story of the death of Śaśāṅka was imagined by Yuan Chwang on the model of the death of Pushyamitra Śuṅga is obviously illogical. Firstly, there is nothing common between the stories of the death of the two monarchs—Pushyamitra is said to have died of a boulder hurled on him by some super-natural agency while Śaśāṅka died of a disease. Secondly, the fact the Yuan Chwang did not invent this story is proved by its occurrence with minor changes in the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and the medieval Bengali tradition quoted by R.C. Majumdar, both of which did not have access to the work of Yuan Chwang. As regards the inclusion of super-natural elements in the Buddhist legends, we should remember that such elements are found in literary traditions of all religions. If these will be regarded as proof of the unreliability of the stories preserved in them, then it will become altogether impossible to use literary data for the reconstruction of Indian history.

The flourishing state of Buddhism in Karṇasuvarṇa, the capital of Śaśāṅka, as reported by Yuan Chwang does not prove anything, for it applies to post-Śaśāṅka period. Yuan Chwang found Buddhism in a flourishing condition in Magadha also, where Śaśāṅka is reported to have adopted an anti-Buddhist policy.

The attribution of Śaśāṅka's policy to political necessities, as Majumdar has himself opined, is "a pure conjucture, based on similar tendencies displayed by the Buddhists of a later age to sacrifice national for the sake of sectarian interests."[1] Further, even if some Buddhists sided with the enemies of Śaśāṅka it can hardly follow that Śaśāṅka could have adopted a policy hostile to Buddhism as a religion. In ancient India any two rival kings could belong to two different religions. But they were not expected to and did not persecute the followers of the religion of their rival. If Śaśāṅka did so, he was clearly following a policy of religious fanaticism. The argument of Sinha and others absolving Śaśāṅka of religious fanaticism on the ground that he persecuted the Buddhists because of political reasons is basically the same which is used by many modern scholars to exculpate Mahmūd Ghazni, Aurangzeb and the like and to exonarate them from the policy of persecuting the Hindus and Hinduism.

[1]Majumdar, R. C., in *HB*, p. 67.

Appendix 8

BUDDHISM UNDER THE PĀLA DYNASTY[1]

The patronage of the Pāla kings forms one of the most important factors in the history of Mahāyāna and Tāntrika Buddhism. The Pāla rulers were all Buddhists, and during their long rule of over four centuries Buddhism found a safe refuge in Bihar and Bengal after it had ceased to have any hold in the rest of the country with the exception of the Himālayan regions. It was mainly from the Pāla empire that Buddhism was introduced into Tibet where, combined with many native beliefs, it survives to the present day.[2] The numerous inscriptions of the Pālas begin with an invocation to the Buddha which sums up the new ideology of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas in the most developed Mahāyāna form.

Gopāla

Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla dynasty, was a benefactor of Buddhism. Whether he himself adopted Buddhism or he was born in a Buddhist family, it is not definitely known. In the inscriptions of Nārāyaṇapāla he is compared to the Buddha. He revived the Nālandā monastery, erected several new monasteries in his dominion, and offered lavish gifts to the Buddhist clergy. During his reign an *upāsaka* built the towering Odantapurī monastery, spending immense gold which he obtained, it is said, miraculously. This structure served as a model for the first monastery built in Tibet. Gopāla himself built the Nālandā temple near Odantapurī. The *ĀMMK* informs us that Gopāla built "vihāras, chaityas, gardens, reservoirs, beautiful free hotels, bridges, deva temples and caves."[3] This shows that though a Buddhist, he was a benevolent ruler and was interested in the welfare of other faiths as well.

The great philosopher and dialectician Śāntarakshita lived and

[1]This Appendix has been written by Shri Shankar Goyal, M.A., Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut.

[2]Basham, A.L., *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 71–73.

[3]Jayaswal, *An Imperial History of India*, Vs. 683–90.

worked during the reign of Gopāla and died during the reign of Dharmapāla.[1] He belonged to a royal family of Bengal and became a distinguished Āchārya of Nālandā. At the invitation of the Tibetan king Khri-sron-ide-tsan, he went to Tibet and stayed there up to 762 A.D. In Tibet he was called Paṇḍita Bodhisattva or Dharma-śāntighosha. Śāntarakshita also spent six years in Nepal where he worked for the propagation of the religion of the Buddha. He was credited with having laid the foundation of the historic Svayambhū Chaitya. Śāntarakshita wrote a commentary on Dharmakīrti's *Vādanyāya* but his masterpiece was the voluminous work *Tattvasaṁgraha* in which he has refuted the views of other Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools and is seen supporting the Yogāchāra views.[2]

Dharmapāla

The next Pāla king Dharmapāla is described as *Paramasaugata* in his own inscriptions as well as in those of his successors. He is credited with the foundation of the Vikramaśīla or Vikramaśilā monastery, one of the most important Buddhist seats of learning in India from the 9th to the 12th centuries A.D.[3] It was so-called because Dharmapāla had a second name or epithet *Vikramaśīla*.[4] He was a great admirer of the teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. He made Haribhadra, the great commentator of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* and exponent of the Yogāchāra philosophy, his spiritual preceptor. Haribhadra had come of a royal family and had studied the Mādhyamika texts with Śāntarakshita, and the Yogāchāra texts with Vairochanabhadra. He wrote commentaries on the *Ashṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* and other texts. His Commentary (*Āloka*) on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, a treatise interpreting the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* from the Yogāchāra standpoint, is a testimony of his vast and deep knowledge of the Buddhist doctrines.[5] He resided in the Traikūṭaka-vihāra and died about two decades after Dharmapāla's accession to the throne. After

[1]For the detailed life-history of Śāntarakshita, vide, Singh, S.D.P., 'Nālandā Paṇḍita Śāntarakshita : His Writings and Endeavour to Propagate Buddhism in Tibet and Nepal', *PIHC*, 42nd Session, 1981, pp. 110–114.

[2]Dutt, N., in *AIK*, p. 270.

[3]For a detailed study of the Vikramaśilā University, vide, Saran, S.C., 'Vikramaśilā University—A Centre of Tāntricism', *K.P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, Patna, 1981, pp. 117–122; also see Chaudhari, R. K., *The University of Vikramaśilā*.

[4]Majumdar, R.C., *A Comprehensive History of India*, III, Pt. I, p. 660.

[5]*AIK*, p. 270.

the death of Haribhadra, Buddhajñāna-pāda one of the best disciples of Haribhadra, became the spiritual preceptor of Dharmapāla. He propagated the rituals and teachings of the *Kriyā* and *Yoga tantras*, particularly of the *Guhyasamāja*, *Māyājāla*, *Chandraguhyatilaka* and *Mañjuśrīkrodha*. He performed the consecration ceremony of the Vikramaśilā monastery and became its first spiritual head, the Vajrāchārya.

Besides these two teachers, there were a number of distinguished monks, specialising in certain branches of studies. They include the Tāntrika Āchāryas Praśāntamitra, Buddhaguhya and Buddhaśānti, disciples of Buddhajñāna-pāda, Rāhulabhadra and Āchārya Padmākaraghosha of Kashmir, the commentator Kamalaśīla, and the dialecticians Kalyāṇa-rakshita, Sobhavyūha, Sāgaramegha, Prabhākara, and Pūrṇavardhana and Dharmākaradatta to Kashmir. Praśāntamitra, the disciple of Jñānapāda, studied the *Prajñāpāramitās* and some sections of the *Kriyā* and *Yoga tantras* and attained *Yamāntaka-siddhi*. He built a monastery called Amṛtākara to the south of Nālandā.[1]

In the Vikramaśilā monastery, founded by Dharmapāla, in the north on the top of a mountain near the Gaṅgā in Magadha, there were fifty-three cells suitable for Tāntrika esoteric practices and fifty-four rooms for general use of monks; in all there were 108 cells including the central chamber. These were surrounded by a wall having six gates.[2] One hundred and eight bhikshus (paṇḍitas) were in change of the vihāra. Each of them had a certain specified duty, *viz.* making offerings to deities, performing *homa*, giving initiation, looking after pigeons, temple-attendants, and so forth. Some of these bhikshus were entrusted also with the task of teaching different subjects, *e.g.* grammar, metaphysics, logic, ritualistic practices, etc. The students or listeners to the discourses were given food and

[1] *Ibid*, p. 271.

[2] Vikramaśilā (present-day Antichak in District Bhagalpur, Bihar) excavations have brought to light a massive stūpa with two terraces belonging to the Pāla period. The excavation of 1971–82 exposed the northern, western, and portions of the southern and eastern wings of a 330-metre square monastery. "From the plan so far reconstructed, it may be seen that the monastery had altogether 208 (*sic.*) cells. The gateway complex is located in the centre of the north wing. The passage through the gateway is paved with bricks on edge. The outer wall of the monastery is marked by rectangular and circular bastion-like projections" (Thapar, B. K., *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in India*, Paris, 1985, p. 135).

money by the state. The income of the establishment was shared equally by the 108 paṇḍitas.[1] Diplomas were awarded to the monk-students who showed proficiency. To this monastery flocked students not only from all corners of India but also from Tibet and other foreign countries. Here many Sanskrit texts were translated into Tibetan. Jinarakshita, the commentator of Sarvajñamitra's *Sragdharā-stotra*, lived in this monastery and so also did Dharma-śrīmitra, mentioned in the *Bṛhat-svayambhū-purāṇa*.[2] Tārānātha gives an account of the succession of the Vajrāchāryas of the Vikramaśilā monastery. According to him there were five generations of Vajrāchāryas, but actually there are twelve names, preceding the six *dvāra-paṇḍitas*, *viz.* Buddhajñānapāda, Dīpaṅkarabhadra, Jayabhadra, Śrīdhara, Bhavabhadra, Bhavyakīrti, Līlāvajra, Durjanachandra, Kṛshṇasamayavajra, Tathāgatarakshita, Bodhibhadra, Kamalarakshita; then the six *dvāra-paṇḍitas*, Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna and others and then Abhayākaragupta, Subhākaragupta and others.[3]

During the reign of Dharmapāla, the Saindhavaśrāvakas created some trouble at Vikramaśilā. They destroyed the metal image of Heruka, burnt the Mantra treatises, preached that Mahāyānism (*i.e.* Tāntrikism) did not represent Buddha's true teachings and converted many pilgrims coming from Bengal to their faith. These Śrāvakas were mostly bhikshus of Siṁhala. Dharmapāla was enraged at this attempt of the Śrāvakas and was going to punish them, but he desisted from doing so at the advice of Buddhajñānapāda.

Dharmapāla is said to have established fifty monasteries. He was the founder of the Somapura Vihāra in Vārendrī. According to some accounts he also built a magnificient monastery at Odantapuri, though the credit for this is given by some to either his father or his son.[4] Archaeological excavations have proved that Paharpur in Rajshahi district of Bengal was the ancient site of the Somapura monastery, for some of the seals discovered here bear the inscription that Somapura Vihāra was of (that is, was founded by) Dharmapāla.[5] He also patronised Nālandā Vihāra. A copper plate grant of Parameśvara Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Dharmapāla has been

[1]Quoted by N. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 272.

[4]Majumdar, R.C., *CHI*, p. 660.

[5]For an account of these excavations cf. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 55 (Paharpur—K. N. Dikshit).

found at Nālandā.[1] An inscription incised on the rim of a sculptured stūpa bearing a number of seated Buddha figures carved on it has been found at Nālandā. It refers to the time when "the illustrious Dharmapāla of wide fame was the king."[2]

Though Dharmapāla was a Buddhist, he was tolerant to other religions. His Khalimpur inscription speaks of him as honouring all the sects, especially the Brāhmaṇas. He granted four villages to a Brāhmaṇical temple and appointed Brāhmaṇa Garga as his minister. According to H.P. Sastri, Dharmapāla's liberal attitude towards Brāhmaṇism was due to the influence of his Hindu wife Raṇṇādevī, who was a daughter of Parabala, a Rāshṭrakūṭa chief.[3]

Devapāla

Devapāla, the son and successor of Dharmapāla, also followed the religious policy of his father. He was a patron of Buddhism, and is described as *Paramasaugata* in his inscriptions. A votive inscription on a metal image dated in the 3rd year of his reign has been found at Nālandā. Tārānātha credits him with the re-establishment of the Buddhist religion. An undated Buddhist inscription from Ghosrawan informs us that a Brāhmaṇa of Nagarahāra was appointed by Devapāla the Chief-Abbot of Nālandā. Another copper-plate inscription with the seal of Devapāla found at Nālandā states that Bālaputradeva, king of Suvarṇadvīpa, requested for the permission (of Devapāla) to grant four villages for the maintenance of the vihāra at Nālandā built by Bālaputradeva himself. Devapāla granted the request.[4] Another inscription on a statue of the Buddhist goddess Tārā found at Hilsa (15 miles from Nālandā), mentions Devapāla and Mañjuśrīdeva of Nālandā Mahāvihāra and registers a gift by Gaṅgādhara, a lay-devotee of Sakka (Buddha). It is dated in the 35th year of Devapāla's reign.[5] Several other Buddhist inscriptions of the reign of Devapāla have been found at Nālandā and other sites.

One of the most remarkable achievement of Devapāla was the restoration of the sand-buried temple, Śrī Traikūṭaka, and its

[1]Cf. Sinha, B.P., *Dynastic History of Magadha*, p. 183.
[2]Sinha, *The Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha*, p. 365.
[3]Sinha, *ibid.*, pp. 365-66; also cf. Ray, H.C., *Political History of Northern India*, p. 56.
[4]Sinha, *ibid.*, p. 376; Majumdar, R.C., in *The History of Bengal*, pp. 121-122.
[5]Sinha, *op. cit.*

enlargement. This temple in course of time came to be known as the new Somapurī-vihāra the ruins of which have been discovered at Paharpur. Haribhadra states in the colophon of his work, *Abhisamayālaṅkārāloka*, that he resided in the Traikūṭaka-vihāra which was adorned with learned men.[1]

Successors of Devapāla

After Devapāla, the most energetic ruler of the Pāla dynasty was Mahīpāla I. He and his son Nayapāla tried, not without success, to maintain the progress of Buddhism. It suffered decline during the political troubles that followed, but in the reign of Rāmapāla (c. 1077–1120 A.D.) the religion became active again. But this was the last flickering of the lamp. From now onward Buddhism continued to decline till it was finally ousted from the land of its birth by the Turkish invaders towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. (*supra*, Chapter 20).

Some minor royal dynasties, ruling in Bengal during the Pāla period, were followers of Buddhism. The Tibetan sources inform us that Tāntrika Buddhism flourished in Vaṅgāla under the Chandras, and that king Gopīchandra of legendary fame belonged to this dynasty.[2] The famous Buddhist scholar of Vikramapura, Atīśa Dīpaṅkara, is said to have been born in the royal house of that place. He was probably related to the Chandras.[3] The Sena kings, however, do not seem to have had any special liking for Buddhism, and Buddhism did not receive much patronage from them. Consequently Buddhist institutions soon disappeared and those which lingered on did not appear to have long survived the invasion of the Turks.

Buddhism under the Pālas appears to have been completely different from the Buddhism which Yuan Chwang describes in the middle of the 7th century A.D. The ancient schools, like Sammatīya etc., are no longer spoken of in Eastern India. The Mahāyāna had developed forms of mysticism which are known as Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna. The leaders of this new movement are all celebrated in Buddhist tradition as Siddhas, and their number is traditionally reckoned as eighty-four (vide, *supra*, Chapter 13).

[1]Majumdar, R. C., *AIK*, p. 273.
[2]Quoted by Bagchi, P. C., in *The History of Bengal*, I, Ch. XIII, p. 418.
[3]*Ibid.*

The possession of Magadha gave the Buddhist Pāla rulers the mastery over some of the greatest vihāras of India, viz. Nālandā, Odantapurī and Vikramaśilā. The last two were founded by the Pālas themselves. The Nālandā Mahāvihāra was damaged by fire some time before the eleventh regnal year of Mahīpāla I, but was repaired in that year. Far more damaging to it was, however, the rise of Vikramaśilā which, about this time, surpassed Nālandā in fame and renown. Tārānātha even hints that the professorial board of Vikramaśilā kept watch over the affairs of Nālandā, which amounts to a sort of control by the former over the latter.[1]

The University of Somapurī, the site of which is represented by Paharpur in North Bengal, was in a flourishing condition till the eleventh century. Atīśa Dīpaṅkara lived here when he translated into Tibetan in collaboration with some others, the *Madhyamaka-ratna-pradīpa* of Bhāvaviveka. About the middle of the eleventh century it was burnt down by the armies of Vaṅgāla (South-East Bengal). Some time later a monk named Vipulaśrīmitra undertook the renovation of the monastery, but it could not be restored to its former greatness.

Rāmapāla founded a new Mahā-vihāra called Jagaddala, which also came to occupy an important position in Bengal. Besides Vibhūtichandra and Dānaśīla the names of some other scholars, *e.g.*, Mokshākaragupta, the logician, Śubhākaragupta, Dharmākara, etc. are intimately associated with Jagaddala. The great Śākyaśrībhadra is also said to have resided here for some time.

Amongst other famous vihāras of the Pāla period may be mentioned the Traikūṭaka, Devīkoṭa, Paṇḍita, Sannagara, Phullahari, Paṭṭikeraka, and Vikramapurī. The Traikūṭaka-vihāra was the place where Haribhadra composed his famous commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* under the patronage of Dharmapāla. It was situated probably somewhere in West Bengal as there is mention of a Traikūṭaka Devālaya being unearthed in the Rāḍhā country. Devīkoṭa was in North Bengal and the Paṇḍita-vihāra in Chittagong. Phullahari and its hermitage are frequently referred to as a place where several famous Buddhist Āchāryas lived and Sanskrit texts were translated into Tibetan in collaboration with Tibetan scholars. It was situated in Western Magadha probably somewhere near

[1]Bose, P. N., *Indian Teachers of Buddhist Universities*, p. 36; also see, Das Gupta, N. N., in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 415.

Monghyr. Sannagara in Eastern India is mentioned as an important seat of Buddhist learning and a Buddhist scholar named Vanaratna, who was responsible for a large number of Tibetan translations, hailed from that place. Vikramapurī was in Vikramapura in Dacca and flourished mostly under the patronage of the Chandras and Senas.[1]

"To all these mahā-vihāras or universities, richly endowed with royal grants, flocked learners from all quarters of India to receive instructions at the feet of the most profound savants of the day. Another feature that marked them and which is historically very important, is that they were largely frequented by monks from Tibet, specially from the time of Mahīpāla I. This resulted in bringing Tibet closer to India than ever. While, usually on invitation from the Tibetan kings, the vihāras used to send forth from time to time pre-eminent scholars to the Land of Snow with the mission of preaching the gospel of the Buddha or reforming the religion there, they also frequently supplied competent monks to that country for translating Buddhist works from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Thus the nucleus of a Tibetan Buddhist literature began to take shape in Tibet. Gradually, the Tibetans, too, began to study Sanskrit under Indian monks both in Tibet and in India and took up the task which had hitherto been done by the Indian monks only. The influx of the Tibetan monks began to swell more and more as time went on, and the universities had, as a matter of course, to make commodious provisions for them to learn Sanskrit. The Buddhist *Paṇḍitas* of India, in their turn, found it alluring to master Tibetan, in order to permeate Tibet all the more with the doctrines of Buddhism by means of Tibetan translations of Sanskrit books, and the Indian universities, particularly those of Eastern India and Kashmir, became genial centres of the cultivation of Tibetan. The growth of the vast Tibetan Buddhist literature was thus due as much to the contributions of Indian scholars, as to those of the Tibetans themselves. That literature forms now, for the most part, the only extant source of our information regarding the Indian Buddhist scholars and their works during the period under review.[2]"

[1]Bagchi, in *The History of Bengal*, I, pp. 417–18.
[2]Das Gupta, N. N., *op. cit.*, pp. 416–17.

Appendix 9

BUDDHIST SYMBOLS AND BUDDHA IMAGE ON ANCIENT INDIAN COINS[1]

In the monuments of the centuries before the Christian era Lord Buddha has been represented by a number of symbols. We find at Bharhut and Sāñchī the tree, wheel, *chhatra, pādukā*, stūpa etc. on or behind an altar clearly designated in the inscriptions as 'Buddha' (*Bhagavato*) and worshipped as such. In elaborate scenes from the life of the Buddha, he is represented only by symbols. In the light of this fact D.B. Spooner made a study of the symbols on the Punch Marked Coins and discovered that five of them were constantly associated together, namely (1) the solar wheel, (2) the branch of the tree, (3) the stūpa, (4) the humped-bull before a taurine, and (5) a central sphere supporting three *chhatras* with intervening taurines.[2] According to him the stūpa is to be actually identified with the Buddhist chaitya symbol, the so-called solar symbol stands for *dharmachakra*, the tree-branch represents the Bodhi tree and the symbol No. 5 is a highly conventionalised lotus. The lotus as such is not an exclusively Buddhist symbol, but it is so omnipresent in the Buddhist art of all periods that it is at least appropriate and harmonious in any group of distinctively Buddhist elements. The humped-bull with the taurine mark is no doubt associated with the Hindu religion but, Spooner believed, it should have been retained in popular favour by those Hindus who had gone over to the Buddhist teaching.

However, Spooner's explanation of the symbols on the Punch Marked Coins from Buddhistic point of view has not been universally accepted.[3] Firstly, whether the significane of the symbols of the Punched Marked Coins is 'religious' at all, is not certain. Secondly, on some coin specimens the depiction of these symbols

[1] This Appendix has been written by Shri Shankar Goyal, M.A., Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut.

[2] *ASI, AR*, 1905-6.

[3] Cf. Chattopadhyay, Bhaskar, *Coins and Icons—A Study of Myths and Symbols in Indian Numismatic Art*, Calcutta, 1977, p. 230.

either collectively or singly betrays unmistakably the influence of cults other than that of the Buddha. This shows that it would be incorrect to say that all these symbols, whenever and wherever found, would imply automatically the influence of the religion preached by the Buddha.[1]

Cunningham has associated certain symbols depicted on cast, local and tribal coins with Buddhism.[2] These symbols are tree in a railing, nandipada and chakra and they have been interpreted as Bodhi tree, the tri-ratna and the dharmachakra respectively.[3] In South India the obverse of a lead coin of the Sātavāhana king Vasishṭhīputra Śrī Pulumāvī shows a wheel with twelve spokes.[4] A.K. Narain says that it is Buddhist dharmachakra and confirms the issuer's leanings towards Buddhism as the twelve spokes in the wheel represent the twelve *nidānas* of the Buddhist doctrine of Paṭichchasamuppāda explaining Bhavachakra or the cycle of birth and death.[5] From epigraphic sources we learn that the Sātavāhana rulers followed Brāhmaṇism, but the discovery of Buddhist caves and epigraphs at Pītalkhorā, Nāsik, Bhājā, Bedsā and Koṅḍāne and of stūpas at Bhaṭṭiprolu, Amarāvatī, Goli and Ghaṇṭaśāla prove that Buddhism was also in a flourishing condition in the Sātavāhana age.[6] It is possible, therefore, that Pulumāvī, later in his life, became a convert to Buddhism. The fact that the Nāsik cave inscription dated in the 22nd year of his reign ends with a salutation to the Buddha[7] supports this surmise.

The device appearing on the obverse of the copper coins of the

[1]For a detailed discussion on the significance of the symbols of *PMC*, vide Goyal, S. R., *The Coinage of Ancient India*, Meerut, 1987, pp. 96–9. Also see Gupta, P. L., and Hardaker, T. R., *Ancient Indian Silver Punch Marked Coins of the Magadha-Maurya-Kārshāpaṇa Series*, Anjaneri, 1985, p. 23; Sarasvati, S. P. Svami and Singh, R., *The Coinage of Ancient India*, I, Delhi, 1986, p. 90 ff.; Allan, John, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, 1967; Chakrabortty, S. K., *A Study of Ancient Indian Numismatics*, Varanasi, 1973.

[2]Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp. 58, 70–71.

[3]Chakraborty, Swati, *Socio-Religious and Cultural Study of the Ancient Indian Coins*, Delhi, 1986, p. 182.

[4]*JNSI*, XXIV, Pt. II, pp. 178–9; also see Sharma, I. K., *Coinage of the Sātavāhana Empire*, p. 68.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]Sircar, D. C., *SI*, p. 186 ff., 196 ff.; Goyal, S. R., *Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṁgraha*, p. 424 ff.; 430 ff.

[7]Goyal, *ibid.*, p. 455.

Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles[1] is usually regarded as the figure of a Buddhist stūpa. It is really a six-arched symbol surmounted by a star and has been found on the punch-marked, cast, local and tribal coins as well as on the coins of the Western Kshatrapas and the Sātavāhanas.[2] According to Theobald[3] they are reliquaries, one in each chamber, of a stūpa. Allan[4], however, thinks that it represents a mountain. An eight-spoked chakra has been shown on the obverse of certain copper coins of Menander.[5] According to Ghosh, each of the eight spokes representes one of the eight-fold paths (Ashṭāṅga-mārga) of the Buddhist philosophy.[6] Cunningham,[7] Whitehead[8] and Narain[9] hold the view that the epithet *dikaios* (Kharoshṭhī *Dhramika*) appearing on certain copper and silver coins of Agathocles suggest the Buddhist leanings of that king. But if *dikaios* suggests Buddhist leanings then we must also accept that apart from Agathocles five other Indo-Greek kings, viz. Archebius, Heliocles, Peucolaus, Strato I and Theophilus were also Buddhists because they all had adopted the same epithet.[10] We of course have the evidence of the *Milinda Pañho* and the Shinkot Casket Inscription to prove Menander's leanings towards Buddhism[11], but no such evidence is available for other Indo-Greek rulers mentioned above.

Scholars are divided in their opinion with regard to the earliest numismatic representation of the human figure of Buddha. We may reproduce the description of the type of Maues on which the seated Buddha has been traced by some scholars. The type is usually described as "elephant and seated king." The coins of this type are of copper and square shape. On their obverse is found "in square frame elephant with wreath in uplifted trunk running to right" and

[1]Gardner, Percy, *The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum* (*BMC*), p. 12.

[2]Allan, *CCAI*, pp. xxix, lx, lxii-iii, lxv, lxviii, 21, 26–27, 38, 47, 64, 80, 82.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]Gardner, *BMC*, p. 50.

[6]Ghosh, N. C., 'The Impact of Indian Tradition on the Coins of Alien Rulers of India, India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture', *Vivekānanda Comm. Volume*, p. 139.

[7]*NC*, 1870, p. 236.

[8]*Ibid.*, 1923, p. 321.

[9]Narain, A.K., *The Indo-Greeks*, pp. 99–100.

[10]Cf. *supra*, Appendix 3, pp. 434–37.

[11]For details, see, *ibid.*

on the reverse is depicted "in square frame king to front seated cross-legged on raised cushion." Some numismatists believe that the king is holding a swort or mace on his knees. But Tarn has advanced the following arguments to show that the seated king on the coins of Maues is actually Buddha[1] : (a) The so-called sword or mace is in reality the back of Buddha's throne. (b) The figure is not seated on a cushion which would go down in the middle and up at the ends, if a men were sitting on it. (c) The elephant on the obverse of the coins is doing reverence to the seated figure on the reverse; the dancing elephant holding a wreath in its trunk probably indicates that the elephant was on its way to garland the Buddha as there are frequent references in Buddhist mythology to elephants who came to garland the Buddha.[2] (d) The fact that the figure is placed on the reverse should alone be conclusive that it cannot represent the king. Long ago, Longworth Dames also suggested the probability of the representation of the Buddha on a coin of Maues. He observed : "A close examination of the Plates and three specimens in my possession fails to confirm the presence of a sword, the horizontal line to the right being probably part of the seat. The attitude of the figure seems to justify its identification as a seated Buddha, very like the seated Buddha on Kanishka's coin."[3] Altekar[4] also refers to the *Jātaka-Aṭṭha-Kathā-Nidāna* which tells us that when the Buddha was about to take his seat on the Vajrāsana before his Enlightenment a grass-cutter named Sothiya offered him eight handfuls of grass to cover his seat with. Gautama is said to have accepted the offering. According to Altekar the seat appears covered with at least five handfuls of grass and most probably there is a big handful on the left at the extreme end and two more handfuls coalesced together on right which would bring up the total number of handfuls of grass to eight.

According to S.V. Sohoni the elephant shown on the coins is really Indra's vāhana Airāvata as Indra is said to have once gone to visit the Buddha in the Indraśaila Cave.[5] Sohoni also connects the obverse device of these coins to the meeting of the Buddha and Indra. Sohoni compares this with the sculptural representations of

[1]Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 400.

[2]Chakraborty, S., *op. cit.*, p. 185.

[3]*JRAS*, 1912, quoted by B. Chattopadhyay, pp. 230–31.

[4]*JNSI*, XIV, p. 52.

[5]*JBRS*, (Buddha Jayanti Special Issue), 1956, pp. 214–15.

the meeting of the Buddha and Śakra (Indra). Sohoni also interprets what Altekar takes to be bundles of grass as crags of rock in the Indraśaila Cave where the Buddha sat meditating.

If we accept the identification of the figure as that of the Buddha then the importance of these coins would increase considerably as representing the earliest datable Buddha figure on coins. So far scholars have taken the figure appearing on the coins of Kanishka (close of the first cent. A.D.) as the earliest representation of the Buddha in human form. If we accept the identification of the figure on the coins of Maues with that of the Buddha then the antiquity of the Buddha figure would be pushed back a good hundred years. It would also prove that even before the rise of the Mahāyāna efforts had been made by foreign converts to represent the Buddha in human form. However, the theory of Tarn and his supporters regarding the occurrence of the Buddha image on the coins of Maues is not generally accepted. In this connection Marshall points out that the so-called back of Buddha's throne is manifestly some sort of weapon and is held in the same way as one depicted on an analogous coin of Azes.[1] In placing his own figure on the reverse, Maues followed the precedent set by Antimachus II Nikephoros, who appears on horse-back on the reverse of his silver issues, with Nike holding a palm or wreath on the obverse. Antimachus Nikephoros ruled in Gandhāra and it was in Gandhāra that Maues issued this particular type of coins. The "elephant with wreath" instead of Nike with wreath on the obverse of the coins of Maues seems to have been copied from a similar type on the reverse of square copper coins of Antialkidas, the diademed bust of king being depicted on the obverse. It seems therefore that the figure of the seated king on the reverse of the coins of Maues cannot be reasonably identified with that of the seated figure of the Buddha.

On the obverse of some coins of Kujula Kadphises, the first Kushāṇa ruler, is shown a figure seated cross-legged with right hand uplifted. It is wearing conical head-dress with knob at the top. On the reverse is found Zeus standing with right hand advanced. The two coins of Kadaphises reproduced by Smith as Buddha specimens, bear on the obverse "Śive and bull" design and on the reverse the so-called "Buddha, seated cross-legged with right arm raised and left hand on hip." But it is difficult to regard the figure on these coins as

[1]*Taxila*, I, pp. 79–81.

that of the Buddha in view of the following grounds:[1]

(1) According to Whitehead, while Buddha is represented on the obverse, Zeus occupies the reverse. According to Smith, Buddha occupies one side, the other side bears Śiva and bull design. It seems rather unusual that the issuer monarch should not be represented on any side of the coin. (2) The representation of deities on both the sides of the coin is rare in the numismatic usage of the Kushāṇas. (3) The seated figure with raised arm represented on the reverse of the Kadaphises coins closely follows the design on the obverse of "seated king and Zeus" type of coins discovered by Marshall in Taxila. (4) The representation of the seated king on the reverse is not unknown. The coins of Maues and Azes referred to above show the king seated cross-legged on some specimens issued by them. (5) The conical knobbed cap and a weapon in the raised right hand are not the attributes of Buddha. (6) The halo round the head which was an invariable feature of all the figures of the Buddha found on the coins of Kanishka is conspicuous by its absence.[2] (7) According to Coomaraswamy on account of the hammer-like object placed in his raised hand, the seated figure on the coins of Kadphises I cannot be definitely recognised as the Buddha.[3]

The seated figures on some Ujjayinī coins which have been referred to by Coomaraswamy are of uncertain character. It seems, therefore, that no certain representation of the Buddha appears on coins before the time of Kanishka.[4]

Buddha is undoubtedly represented on gold and copper coins of Kanishka. On the reverse of a gold stater of Kanishka, now in the British Museum, the Buddha stands, being accompanied by the Greek legend *Boddo*, facing nimbate, clad in chiton and himation. His right hand is advanced and his left hand holds an alms-bowl. Another specimen of this type from a different die has recently been published.[5] On the reverse of his copper coins the Greek legend is *Sakamana Boddo* that is, Śākyamuni Buddha, or *Metrauo Boudo*, that is Maitreya Buddha.[6] Buddha appears as facing, nimbate with his

[1]Vide, Chattopadhyay, B., *The Age of the Kushāṇas—A Numismatic Study*, p. 187.

[2]Agrawala, V. S., *Indian Art*, p. 242.

[3]Coomaraswamy, A. K., *The Origin o the Buddha Image*, p. 16.

[4]*Coins and Icons*, p. 234.

[5]Bajpai, K. D., 'A New Boddo Type Gold Coin of Kanishka', *JNSI*, XLIV, 1982, p. 42 ff.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 45.

right hand raised as if for teaching and alms-bowl in left hand. On some specimens the same legend is accompanied by the depiction of Buddha, seated, with left hand in lap and right hand raised in the attitude of blessing. Again, in another specimen the Buddha is found seated on pediment with both hands raised in front of breast. But the legend has become fragmentary in character.[1]

So far as the *mudrās* and other iconographic features are concerned, the Buddha is found standing to front on some coins, while on others he is found seated. Regarding gestures it may be observed that in most cases the right hand is found raised, most probably in the *Varadamudrā*. On some coins standing Buddha is shown in *Vyākhyānamudrā*. On the gold stater, now in the British Museum, the Buddha is found seated with his right hand on his breast, making the *Vitarkamudrā*, his left hand holding the bottle of his ambrosia (*amṛta*). Again, on some specimens seated Buddha is depicted in the *Dharmachakra pravartana mudrā* (gesture of turning the Wheel of Law). The cross-legged position of seated Buddha reminds us of *Mahārājāsana*. The dress of Buddha is prominently shown on the sculptures. It comprises three pieces, *antaravāsaka*, the *uttarāsaṅga* and the *saṅghāṭi*. On the coins we find Buddha wearing an upper garment (*uttarāsaṅga*) which covers the breast and the shoulders and a lower garment (*antaravāsaka*) which hangs down to the feet. This is of course more clearly shown in case of standing Buddha.

In Buddhist art, some conventional *lakshaṇas* are generally adopted to characterise the figure of Buddha. His head is surmounted by *Ushṇīsha*, and the *Urṇā* between the eye-brows. But on the coins it is difficult to distinguish these *lakshaṇas*. The entire figure of the Buddha is enveloped by a *prabhāmaṇḍala* on the gold piece in the British Museum. On other specimens the Buddha is depicted with a *śiraśchakra* (nimbus) round his head. Grunwedel[2] and M. E. Drouin[3] believe that the *śirāśchakra* and *prabhāmaṇḍala* are of Hellenic origin. But Coomaraswamy has pointed out that the nimbus found with the Buddhas of Mathurā and Gandhāra can be traced in the Vedic ritualistic golden disc placed on the fire-altar to represent the sun. As shown elsewhere in this work, the Buddhists had developed at an

[1]For the development of Kanishka's faith in Buddhism, cf. Sircar, D.C., 'Religious Leanings of the Kushāṇa Kings', *Some Problems of Kushāṇa and Rājpūt History*, Calcutta, p. 11, 17 ff.

[2]Grunwedel, *Buddhist Art*, p. 86.

[3]*IA*, XXXII, 1903, p. 431.

early date a conception of the Buddha as a Mahāpurusha or Chakravartin characterised by thirty-two principal *lakshaṇas*. Therefore the question of borrowing these *lakshaṇas* from the Hellenic source does not arise.[1]

[1]I am grateful to Dr. S. K. Gupta, Associate Professor, Dept. of History and Culture, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, for discussing with me the problems covered in this Appendix and clarifying some points connected with them.

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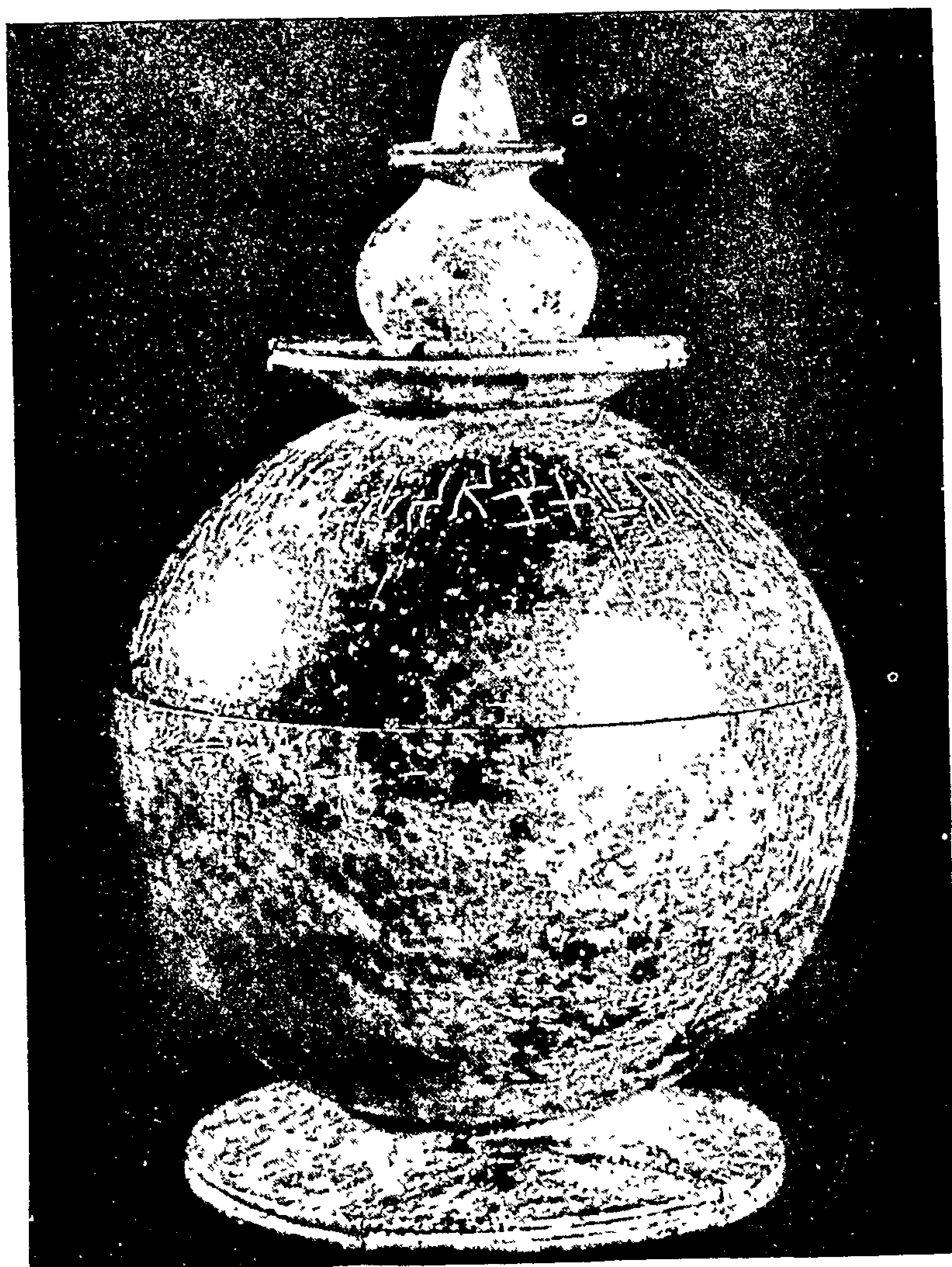
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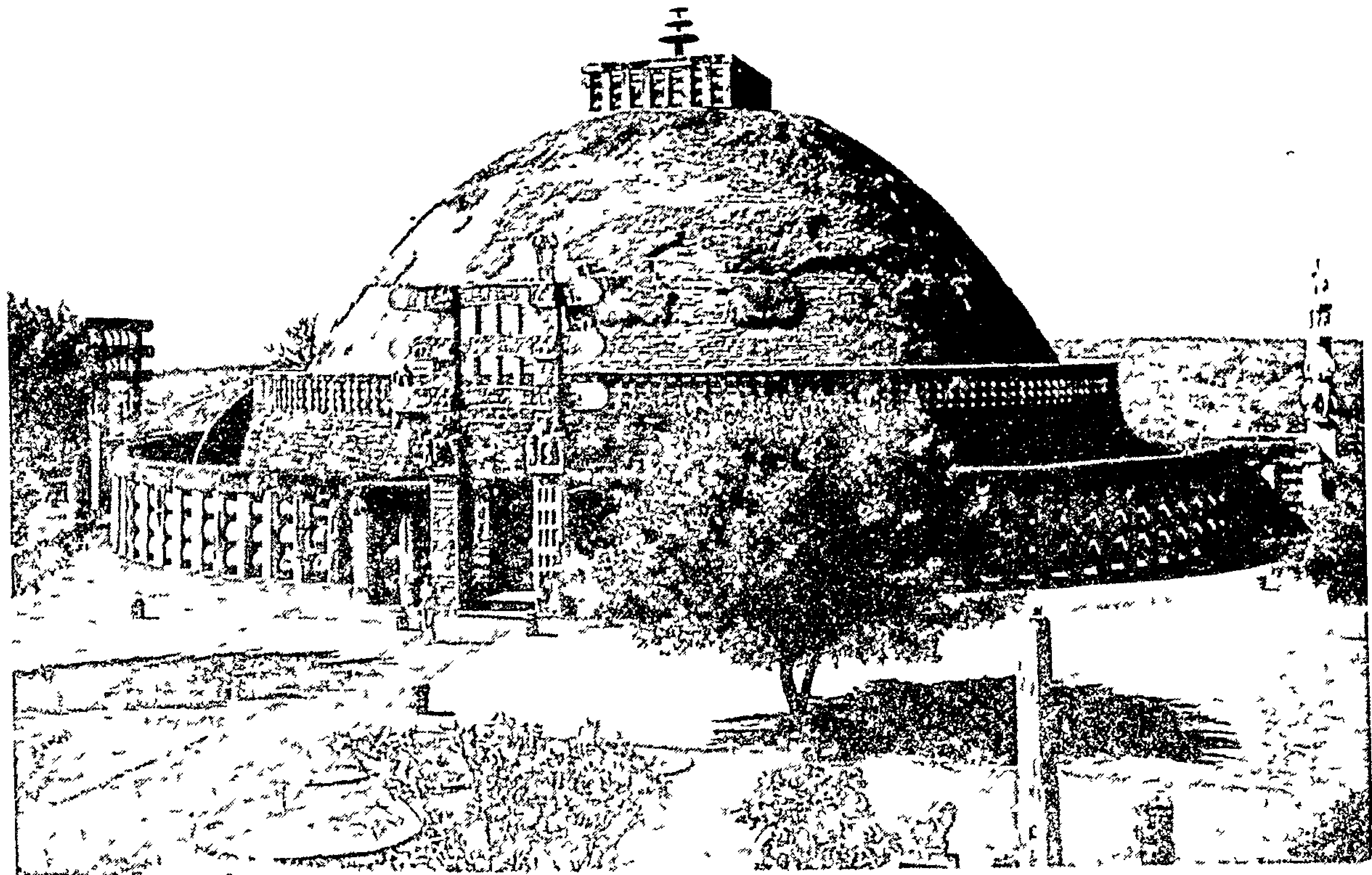
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Piprāhwā Inscribed Casket



Lomaśa Rsi Cave : Close up View of the Doorway



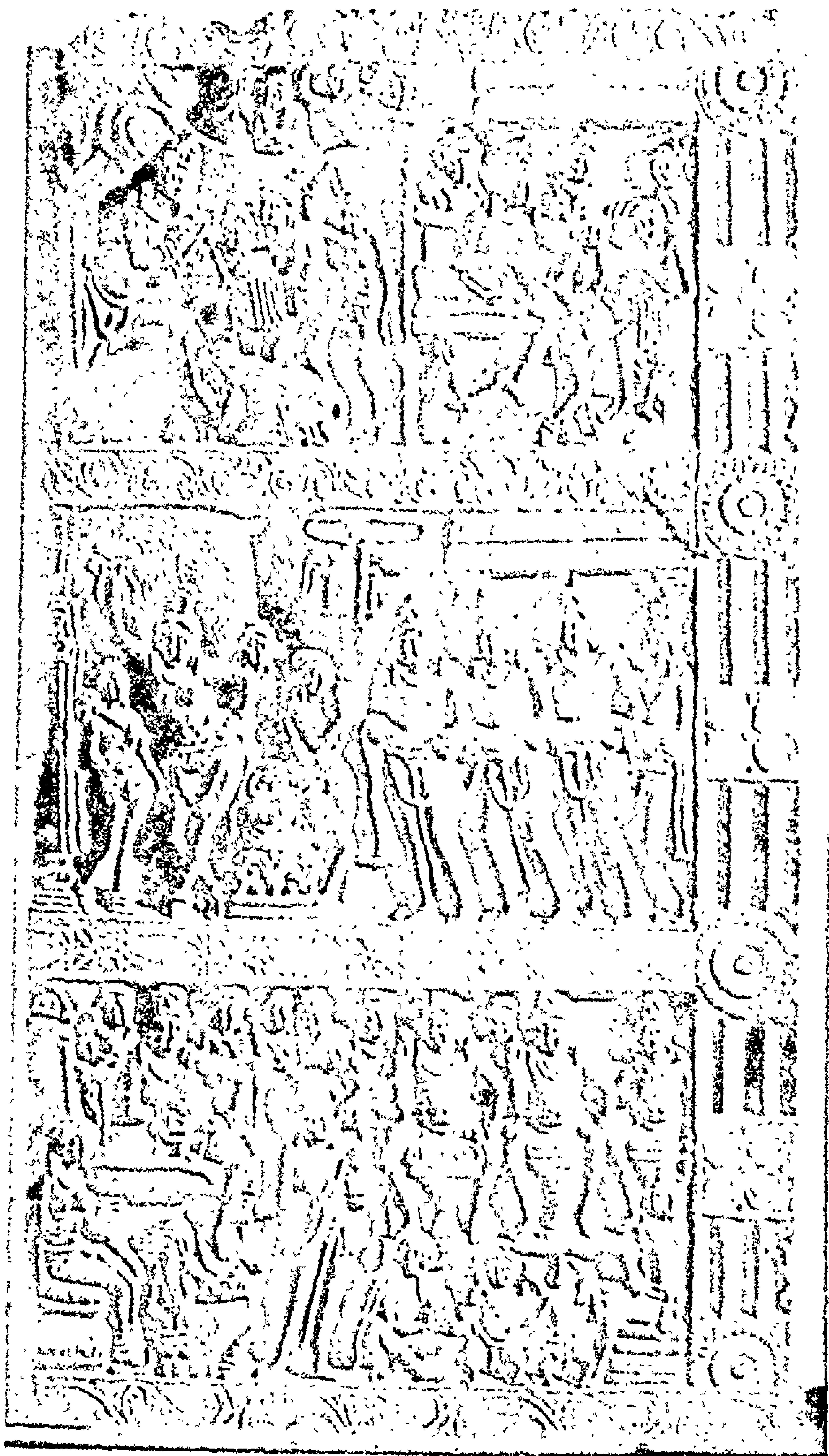
The Stūpa of Sāñchī



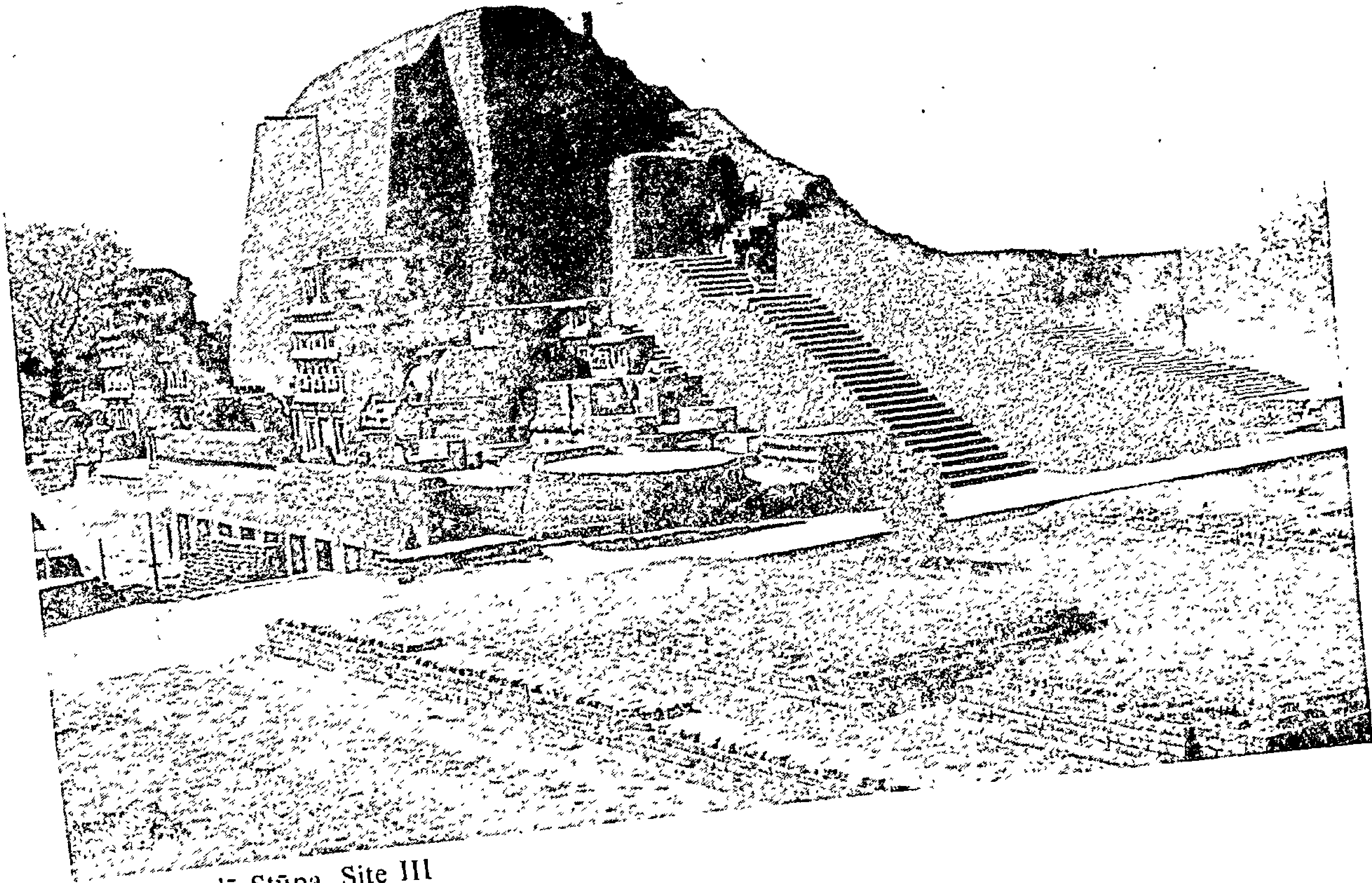
Buddha Image : Gupta Period, Mathura



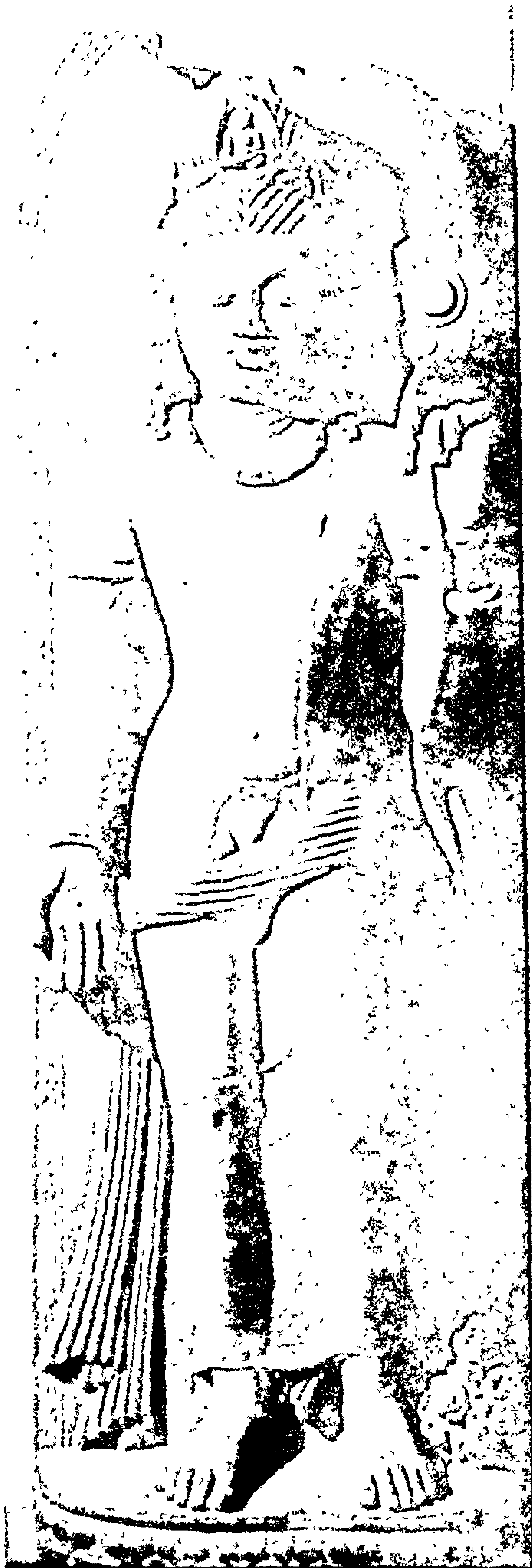
Seated Buddha in *Dharmachakrapravarttanamudrā*, Gupta period, Sarnath



Scenes from Buddha's Life, Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, Ikshvāku, 3rd century, A.D.



Nālandā Stūpa, Site III



Nālandā Avalokiteśvara, 8th century A.D